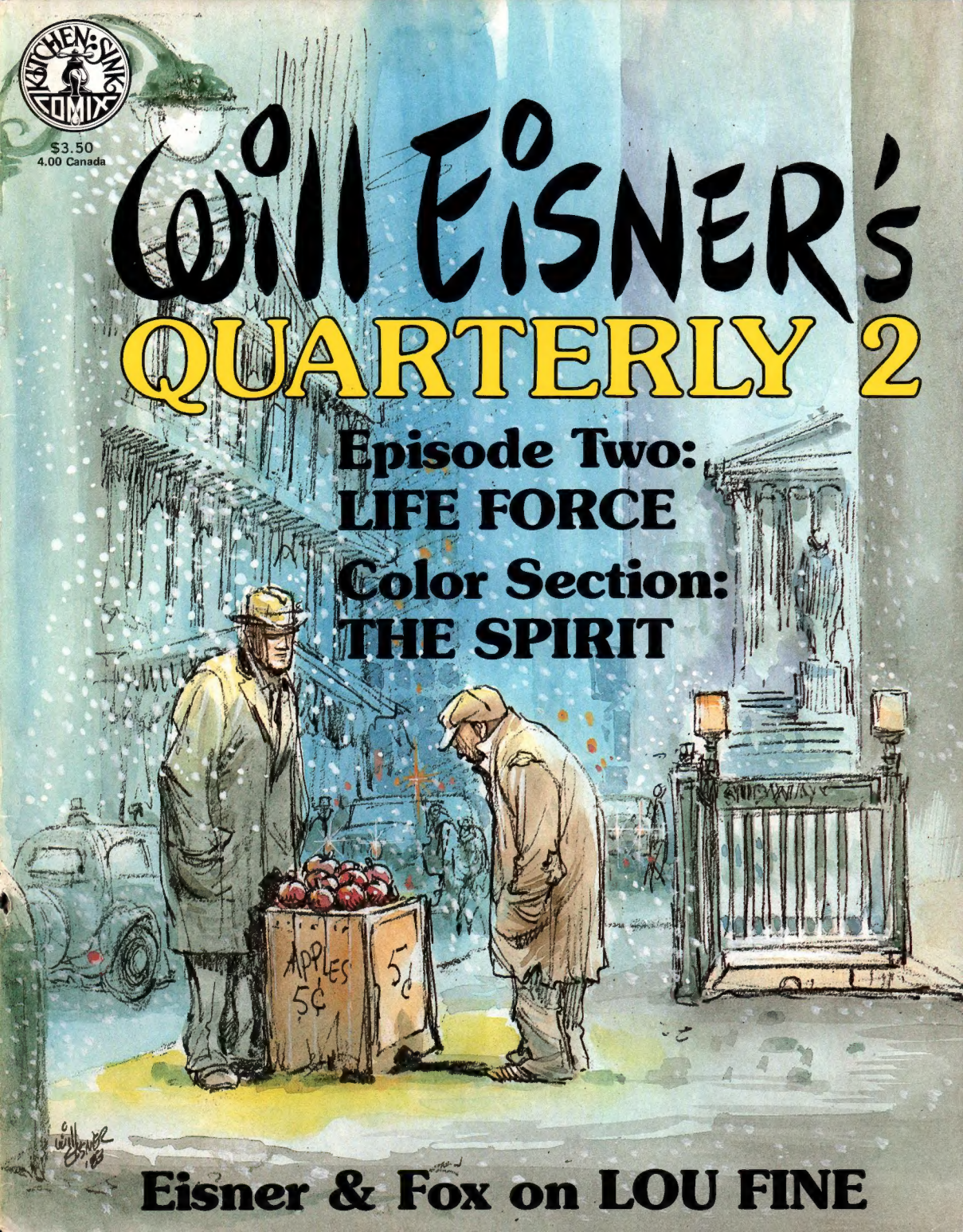
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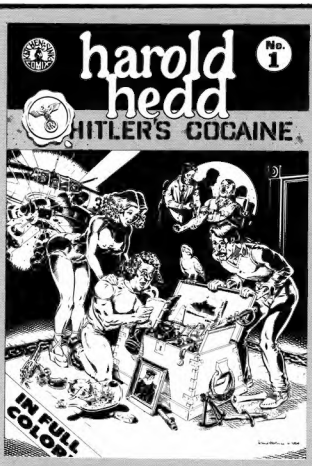

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Features an all-new Harold Hedd adventure! Hand-cut color separations by Holmes himself! Quality paper and color throughout! No.2 follows in August! Reserve yours now!

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NO.2 SPRING 1984

3....LIFE FORCE.
Chapters four through six of Will Eisner's continuing graphic novel shows a WASP entering the ethnic hive at 55 Dropsie Avenue, and members of the Black Hand confront some of the denizens of the Bronx tenement.

29....SPIRIT SECTION.
The Spirit is forced outside the law permanently when he's accused of murder, and fights a deadline to save a woman's life. Rooftop action choreographed by Will Eisner July 21, 1940. In full color.

36....LADY LUCK.

40....MR. MYSTIC.

46....SHOP TALK.
Will Eisner and Gill Fox discuss the life and career of the enigmatic Lou Fine.

WILL EISNER'S QUARTERLY is published 4 times a year by Kitchen Sink Press, Inc., No.2 Swamp Road, Princeton WI 54968. ISSN No. 0279-5523. Subscription rates: $14 per year in North America. $18/year elsewhere via seamail or $25/year via airmail. Contents copyright © 1984 Will Eisner. All rights reserved. The name "The Spirit" is registered by the U.S. Patent Office, Marca Registrada, Marque Deposee. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher. Printed in USA. Distribution and wholesale information: (414) 295-6922.
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A Life Force

The story thus far...

In this issue we present chapters four through six of Will Eisner's new graphic novel, *A Life Force.* The first chapters appeared in *Will Eisner's Quarterly* No.1. *A Life Force* chronicles the remarkable and mundane occurences in a Bronx tenement during the depression of the 1930s. The building at 55 Dropsie Avenue is inhabited both by immigrants —many of them Jewish— and by the eternal cockroaches.

During the great economic upheaval of the '30s, many people traveled from city to country and from country to city in search of work. But the Dropsie Avenue dwellers held fast to where they were because they had only just arrived from other, more hostile, places.

The immigrants carried with them the tabernacle of a life force they barely understood. They question and suffer, but they somehow go on living, sustained by their interdependence and their culture.

In the first excerpt, Jacob Shtarkah, an aging carpenter struggling to keep his family from starving, had just finished a five-year project for the synagogue, building a study room. The resident rabbi tells him firmly that the job is over, and that the room will be named for the members who paid for it. Jacob complains that for all his labor and skills he got five years' pay, while the benefactors are getting immortality.

As Jacob trudges home, he suffers a heart seizure in 55 Dropsie's alley. While waiting either to die or to regain his strength, his wife, Rifka, shakes out a carpet from a floor above, and Izzy the Cockroach descends to the ground, falling on his back. Jacob tells the roach that both of them want to live and both of them are in serious trouble. He tells Izzy that man has an additional problem with life: he has to ask "why?" Jacob says that if man made God, any reason for living is in man's head. If God created man, "then the reason for living is still, ...after all is said and done, only a guess." Jacob almost gets in a fight when he stops a man from stepping on Izzy. Soon after, Rifka spies Jacob in the alley and calls him to supper. He struggles up to his home. Izzy rights himself and makes his way to a tin can.

The scene shifts to Manhattan, where Jacob and Rifka's son, Daniel, is an intern at a hospital. He and his mother talk on the phone, and Daniel says he can't attend Sabbath dinner because he has to work and because Rifka can't accept Daniel's fiance, a gentile. Rifka has an "attack" of her own, and Daniel frantically tells her he'll be right over. Jacob enters from a day at the union hall, and asks if Rebecca, the daughter, will be at supper. Rifka says Rebecca will be teaching school that night, but the extra place at the table is set for Daniel, who will attend, as usual.

Rabbi Bensohn, an aged holy man who gives discount Hebrew lessons to boys studying for their bar mitzvahs, lives on the top floor, back. The imposing rabbi is not above using a stick on those not prepared to read. On this day, one of the scamps is in mortal terror because he isn't prepared, and he's sure the awesome wrath of the rabbi —who, if he isn't God, at least looks like Him— will be visited on his head. The kid is saved when the rabbi's senile wife, Beckeleh, interrupts the lesson to serve a little tea. While the rabbi gently ushers his wife away, he gets distracted again by a visit from Jacob. The rabbi wants Jacob to build a room for Beckeleh, so she will come to no harm. Before the two men work out the details, the rabbi dismisses the boys with a few well-chosen words about scholarly duty. Outside, the "saved" student claims the miracle he prayed for came true. An angel came and distracted the rabbi, and the boy didn't have to read...

...Now, into this rich soup of humanity —where men lose jobs and worry and struggle each day, where Manhattan doctors are yanked back to the Bronx for the Sabbath, where roaches share the wealth and small miracles sometimes happen — into this Life Force drops Elton Shaftsbury II, the Shabbasgoy...

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CHAPTER 4
SHABBASGOY

THE SHAFTSBURYS EMIGRATED TO NEW ENGLAND IN 1850. THERE THEY FOUNDED AN AXE-HANDLE FACTORY WHICH FLOURISHED. IT REMAINED IN THE FAMILY'S HANDS UNTIL THE DEATH OF ELTON JOSIAH SHAFTSBURY AROUND 1927.

HIS SON, ELTON SHAFTSBURY II HIS ONLY HEIR, THEN TOOK OVER THE OPERATION OF THE SHAFTSBURY WOOD PRODUCTS COMPANY.

ACTUALLY, YOUNG ELTON HAD LITTLE INTEREST IN RUNNING A BUSINESS. HE HAD BEEN REARED IN COMFORT AND SECURITY. WITH AN UNQUESTIONED CONFIDENCE IN HIS SURVIVAL THAT CAME FROM THE CERTAINTY OF HIS SOCIAL POSITION, HE EXPECTED HIS WORLD TO GO ON, AS IT WAS, FOREVER. HIS SKILLS WERE MAINLY CENTERED IN THE ART OF BEING ACCEPTED AND THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SHALLOW RELATIONSHIPS THAT WERE NORMAL FOR HIS "SET".

WHAT ELTON SHAFTSBURY II REALLY WANTED WAS FREEDOM TO PURSUE HIS SOCIAL LIFE.

SO, UPON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, ELTON SOLD THE FACTORY AND PUT THE PROCEEDS INTO THE STOCK MARKET.

THIS ENABLED HIM TO ENGAGE IN A MORE 'GENTLEMANLY' VOCATION. HE JOINED A MAIN-LINE WALL STREET BROKERAGE HOUSE AND OCCUPIED HIMSELF WITH BEING A 'CUSTOMER'S-MAN'. HERE HIS SOCIAL CONTACTS AND RICH FRIENDS WERE AN ASSET THAT ALLOWED HIM TO MAKE MONEY IN A 'NICE WAY'.

IN THE FALL OF 1929, THE STOCK MARKET COLLAPSED, AND WITHIN MONTHS HIS HOLDINGS WERE WIPED OUT. THE BROKERAGE HOUSE, LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, COLLAPSED AND HIS CIRCLE OF FRIENDS SUFFERED SIMILARLY... THEY SOON DISPERSED.

ELTON'S LAST SAVINGS WERE DEMOLISHED IN THE FAILURE OF THE NOTORIOUS BANK OF U.S.

BY THE WINTER OF 1933 ELTON SHAFTSBURY II, BROKE AND UNEMPLOYED, WAS REDUCED TO SELLING APPLES ON THE CORNER OF WALL AND WILLIAM STREET.

1929

STOCK MARKET DROPS 15 BILLION OCT.29 SELL OFF WORST IN HISTORY 16,410,030 SHARES TRADED

BYRD IN SAFE FLIGHT OVER SOUTH POLE

The N.Y. Times on Nov. 30 reported that Admiral Byrd, the first to conquer the North Pole, succeeded in flying over the South Pole as well.

President Herbert Hoover sent the aviator and his crew a congratulatory message that said in part ". . . we are glad of proof that the spirit of great adventure still lives."

Mayor Jimmy Walker, of New York said, ". . . the American flag will look great down there."

SOCIAL NOTE

BERLIN, OCT. 29

Fritz Von Opel, the first man to fly a rocket plane, revealed today, he would wed Frau Selnik who is one of Germany's six women pilots. They will come to New York in November.

EMBEZZLER GIVES UP $47,000 NAVY LOOT BURIED IN D.C. CHICKEN YARD

OCT. 30, 1929

Lt. Charles Musil, U.S. Navy Paymaster surrendered to the authorities and led them to the cache in a chicken yard. However, $6,100 is still missing and the embezzler admits that he bought some stock before he became penitent and gave up.

BANKS OPTIMISTIC BUT SUPPORT FAILS

On Wednesday, Oct. 30, the New York press reported a major sell off of panic proportions on the previous day. By the end of trading, however, leading issues recovered as much as 14 points in 15 minutes to momentarily, at least, assuage the pall of gloom that overhung the financial centers.

RALLY BRIEF

Organized support from the leading financial houses is gathering to help offset the "mob psychology" that is blamed for the plunge.

1930

MURDER OF GAMBLER STILL UNSOLVED

FEB. 4, 1930

The New York Times in a special report revealed that the killing of Arnold Rothstein on Oct. 4, 1928 has precipitated an inquiry into the affairs of the city's magistrates courts, police department, and possibly fire department. Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, when asked whether he would or would not veto an investigation, laughed, and said he would wait until he saw the legislation before deciding.

"RECOVERY NEAR" DEPRESSION PEAK OVER SAYS HOOVER

"STOCK MARKET CRASH DUE TO SPECULATION ORGY BY PUBLIC"

MAY 1930

President Herbert Hoover in a statement to the press, said today that the programs he instituted succeeded in maintaining courage and confidence. The worst is over he feels.

UNEMPLOYMENT ATTACKED IN SENATE

DEMOCRATS BLAME HOOVER'S POLICIES

MARCH 3, 1930

A major New York paper in an exclusive article reported that the Senate's Democratic leaders accused the Hoover Administration of diverting attention from the increase in unemployment. He questioned administration statistics.

LINDBERGH SETS RECORD CROSSES U.S. IN 14½ HRS.

APRIL 20, 1930

Col. Charles A. Lindbergh added another first to his laurels by flying coast to coast, 14,000 feet at 180 mph. His wife served as navigator.

CONDITIONS GROWING DAILY WORSE SAYS SENATOR LA FOLLETTE.

The Republican Senator from Wisconsin denounced attempts to label demonstrations by the unemployed as a movement by "The Reds." Another Republican guessed that unemployment stood at 6 million despite the questionably lower statistics from federal agencies.

300 N.Y. UNION LOCALS MEET IN MOVE TO COMBAT ACUTE UNEMPLOYMENT

MARCH 8, 1930

A meeting of major union locals in New York's Beethoven Hall will be held on March 19th.

1931

HUNGER RIOTS FAIL AS BRONX MARCH IS BROKEN UP BY COPS

JANUARY 9, 1931

In a demonstration that was reportedly staged by Communists in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx, police succeeded in easily dispersing what was termed as a "sparse" turnout.

At the Salvation Army's bread line on the Bowery at 4th Street, Manhattan, a policeman's jaw was broken.

STOCK MARKET UP

FEB. 17, 1931

The Stock Market rose 2-8 points yesterday on accumulating evidence of a business pickup. This followed a flurry of buying activity the week earlier when on Feb. 11, a rally from public buying sent the list up.

400,000 DEPOSITORS OF NY BANK OF U.S. FATE NOW IN DOUBT

REAL VALUE OF BANK'S ASSETS UNACCOUNTED

FEB. 2, 1931

The NY State Banking Dept. report issued yesterday was without a satisfactory account of the actual condition of the failed bank's assets. After weeks of liquidation, the books of the bank remain as cloudy as they were on the day it closed.

$75,000,000 of the closed bank's assets are apparently lost or at least cannot be accounted for.

HOOVER WILL VETO BONUS BILL DESPITE SENATE PASSAGE

FEB. 20, 1931

The President, despite a vote in the Senate of 72-2 in favor of a loan bill for veterans' payments, warned that it would cause a weakening of the government's financial structure.

HOUSE PAINTERS MAY USE NARROWER BRUSH TO CREATE MORE JOBS

FEB. 20, 1931

The New York Times carried a story today of a threat by the Painters Union of Long Island to go from the normal 6-inch paint brush to a smaller 3-inch brush so as to double the employment of housepainters in the city.

1932

F.D. ROOSEVELT WINS IN A LANDSLIDE ANTI-PROHIBITION CONGRESS NOW IN O'BRIEN BECOMES NEW YORK'S MAYOR

N.Y. CITY ASKS BANKS AID MAY DEFAULT CITY WAGE CUT $20,000,000

DEC. 7, 1932

The city faced an inevitable default on its obligations. Unless local bankers called on to rescue New York, said that the cut in city payrolls was not enough and urged that another $25,000,000 be cut in city spending before credit could be restored to permit their loan.

Meanwhile, members of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Assn. launched a drive to enlist public support against their pay cut.

DEMOCRATS CONTROL CONGRESS IN RECORD NATIONAL VOTE

ONLY SIX STATES VOTED FOR HERBERT HOOVER

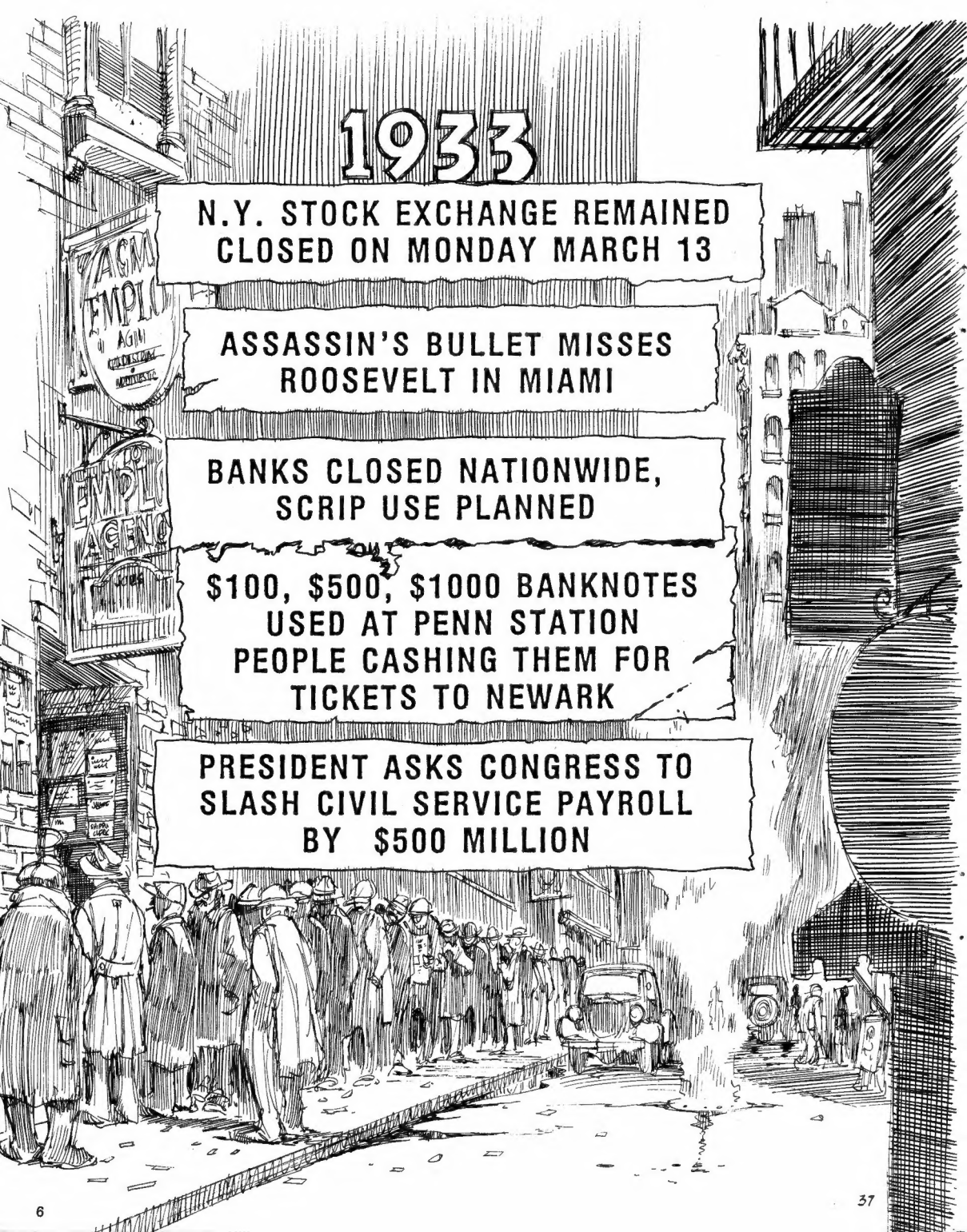
NOV. 9, 1932

In his lead article in the New York Times, Arthur Krock said ". . . a political cataclysm unprecedented in the nation's history and produced by three years of Depression" elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States.

SWARMS OF MOTHS BLANKET THE BRONX

JULY 9, 1932

By midnight last night, a blizzard of fluttering moths engulfed the Bronx and then headed on to include Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn. According to the New York Times, these were a gypsy moth specie and in such great numbers that they halted auto traffic on Jerome Avenue and Pelham Parkway. The police, deluged with phone calls, said that they were at a loss as to just what they were expected to do about it.


1933
N.Y. STOCK EXCHANGE REMAINED CLOSED ON MONDAY MARCH 13
ASSASSIN'S BULLET MISSES ROOSEVELT IN MIAMI
BANKS CLOSED NATIONWIDE, SCRIP USE PLANNED
$100, $500, $1000 BANKNOTES USED AT PENN STATION PEOPLE CASHING THEM FOR TICKETS TO NEWARK
PRESIDENT ASKS CONGRESS TO SLASH CIVIL SERVICE PAYROLL BY $500 MILLION

...AND AS 1933 ENDED THINGS HIT BOTTOM FOR ELTON SHAFTSBURY II
BUT, CLIFFORD...YOU CAN'T ...JUST...THROW ME OUT!! WE WERE SCHOOLMATES... OUR FAMILIES WERE...
OH, COME ON, ELTON... YOU HAVEN'T PAID YOUR RENT FOR A WHOLE YEAR!! ... YOU ARE BORROWED TO THE HILT...THE BANK FORECLOSED ON YOUR HOUSE! YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO LIVE IN SCARSDALE ANY LONGER...BE REALISTIC! TRY DOWN IN THE BRONX, THINGS ARE CHEAP THERE!
IN THE BRONX?! LIVE AMONG IMMIGRANTS? ME? OH LORD!!...AH, CLIFF...COULD I STILL USE MY OLD ADDRESS ...AS A MAIL-DROP...TO KEEP UP APPEARANCES, Y'KNOW.
OH, FACE UP TO IT ELTON! MOST OF THE OLD CROWD'S BROKE THESE DAYS...DON'T COUNT ON YOUR CONNECTIONS...MAYBE YOU STILL CAN GET A JOB AS A 'RUNNER' DOWN ON THE 'STREET'...TRY ONE OF THE OLD LINE BROKERAGE HOUSES.
...SO... AS 1934 CAME IN... ELTON SHAFTSBURY II BECAME A RESIDENT OF THE BRONX.
HAPPY 1934
HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN
HEY! WAKE UP! FREE DRINKS HAPPY NEW YEAR
I WANT TO GO HOME!
SHOO WHERE YOU LIVE, PAL!
55 DROPSIE AVENUE, BRONX
C'MON... I'LL STEER YA HOME BUDDY... HAAAAPPPY NEW YEAR
BAR
38.

TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK
TICK TICK TICK TICK
YOO HOO! MISTER SHAFTSBURY!

COULD YOU COME TO MY DOOR A MINUTE PLEASE?
ITS CALLED A... A SHABBAS-GOY!
I DON'T WANT YOU SHOULD BE INSULTED, MR. SHAFTSBURY, BUT WE NEED SOMEBODY WHO IS NOT JEWISH TO TURN ON OUR STOVE AND THE LIGHTS ON THE SABBATH... IT'S BECAUSE OF OUR RELIGION, Y'KNOW... I'LL PAY YOU FIFTY CENTS EACH WEEK IF YOU'LL DO IT FOR US... HERE...
THANKS!
40

GOOD MORNING, MR. SHAFTSBURY... THANKS FOR TURNING ON OUR LIGHTS N' ALL...
ER... AH, WHAT'S YOUR FIRST NAME?
ELTON
MINE'S REBECCA
YOU WORKING TODAY?
...ER, ...NO
GOT NO JOB?
NO... I'M STILL LOOKING
A FINE LOOKING PERSON LIKE YOU WON'T HAVE MUCH TROUBLE TO FIND A JOB... GOOD LUCK, ELTON!
REBECCA!! ...COME INSIDE!

BARBER
BAR
LADIES SERVED IN REAR
HEY, HEY! SHINE MISTER?
2 CARDS
25¢ PRESSING WHILE YOU WAIT
TAILOR
C'MON! I AINT HAD NO CUSTOMER YET TODAY! CAAAMON !!
5¢
TAILOR SUITS & DRESSES PRESSED WHILE YOU WAIT 25¢
PRESSED WHILE YOU WAIT 25¢
SUITS & DRESSES PRESSED WHILE YOU WAIT 25¢
SMITH & WHITE MEMBERS N.Y. STOCK EXCHANGE SINCE 1901
WELL, NOW, YOUNG SHAFTSBURY, EH? KNEW YOUR FAMILY... OL' CLIFFORD UP IN, AH, SCARSDALE GAVE Y' A PRETTY NICE REFERENCE... BUT I'M AFRAID ALL WE HAVE IS A RUNNER'S JOB! TIMES ARE NOT AS THEY WERE ... CAN'T BE CHOOSEY... EH?
I'LL TAKE IT!
THIS WAY, MR. SMITH WILL SEE YOU NOW!
OKAY, WE'LL START YOU AT $8.50 A WEEK ...EH? .. OH, DICK, HERE'S YOUR NEW RUNNER
GOOD! AFTER YOU FILE THE BONDING COMPANY PAPERS, TAKE THESE STOCKS UP TO THE OLD NORTHERN TRUST, ...AND GET A RECEIPT FROM THE MANAGER!
42

'EVENING, ELTON... I.. ER.. WAITED AROUND FOR YOU! SO, HOW DID IT GO TODAY? DID YOU GET A JOB?
YES REBECCA
GEE, THAT'S WONDERFUL ...WHERE?
AT SMITH & WHITE DOWN ON WALL STREET... THEY'RE STOCK BROKERS!
...WOW!! SO, YOU'RE A BROKER... GEE, I'M IMPRESSED, REALLY!
OH, I'M JUST A 'RUNNER'
SO WHAT?? THEY'LL SOON PROMOTE YOU... YOU'LL SEE!
SAY,...WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO SKATING UP IN THE PARK TOMORROW... IN THE AFTERNOON?
'BECKY! COME IN ALREADY?
I DON'T HAVE SKATES
DON'T WORRY, I'LL LEND YOU MY BROTHER'S HE'S ABOUT THE SAME SIZE AS YOU.... GOOD SEE♪ YOU♪
'BECKY!! I DON'T LIKE HOW YOU LOOK ON HIM... HE'S NOT FOR YOU!
OH...♪ MOMMA... P-L-E-A-S-E IT'S ONLY SKATING ♪♪♪
43

GEE... ELTON... YOU'RE A SMOOTH SKATER... VERY CLASSY... I MEAN YOU HAVE A CERTAIN STYLE ABOUT EVERYTHING!
ELTON... CAN I ASK YOU A PERSONAL QUESTION?
SURE
...ARE YOU, ... I MEAN WERE YOU EVER MARRIED OR, ANYTHING?!
NO!
SO, HOW COME?
OH, I DON'T KNOW... ALL THE GIRLS IN MY SET THOUGHT I WAS ... WELL, SORT OF... AH, DULL
Y'SEE, REBECCA, I WAS NEVER MUCH OF A... A... LADIES' MAN... MY TIME WAS SPENT AT SPORTS... WELL, BEFORE I KNEW IT, I WAS 37... THE 'CRASH' ENDED MY SOCIAL LIFE... IT ALL SEEMS TO HAVE PASSED ME BY!
OH, ELTON, ... HARDLY!
... AND... YOU? REBECCA... HOW ABOUT YOU...
VERY SIMPLE... I'M RATHER PLAIN, A 27 YEAR-OLD SCHOOL TEACHER ... IN MY CIRCLE, THAT ADDS UP TO AN OLD MAID!
NOT TO ME!
OH, ELTON YOU'RE SWEET!
THAT'S HIM, BOSS!
OKAY, LUPO, LET'S GO!

CHAPTER 5

THE BLACK HAND

BETWEEN 1861 AND 1934 THE POPULATION OF ITALY HAD A NATURAL INCREASE OF ABOUT 400,000 A YEAR. THE DENSITY OF ITS POPULATION AVERAGED ABOUT 359 PERSONS PER SQUARE MILE.

DURING THE YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR I, THE ECONOMY, ESPECIALLY IN SOUTHERN ITALY AND SICILY COULD BARELY SUPPORT ITS POPULATION. EMPLOYMENT WAS SO SCARCE THAT ONLY 150 DAYS OF WORK PER YEAR WAS THE AVERAGE. IN THE SOUTHERN FARM LANDS, MALARIA AND OTHER POVERTY-RELATED DISEASES KEPT PRODUCTIVITY LOW.

THE STRONG CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SET UP IN 1870 HAD LONG BEEN BESET BY LOCAL GROUPS THAT GREW OUT OF STRONG 'FAMILIES' WHO CONTROLLED REGIONS. SMUGGLING, PETTY CRIME AND CORRUPTION WAS RIFE. LOYALTY TO A 'FAMILY' OR A SECRET SOCIETY WAS A WAY OF LIFE.

SO, BETWEEN 1919 AND 1924 EMIGRATION SOARED... WITH AMERICA AS THE FAVORED DESTINATION.

IN 1920 ALONE, OVER 300,000 ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS ENTERED THE UNITED STATES.

FINALLY, IN 1924, THE U.S. IMMIGRATION ACT CUT THE TORRENT AND ESTABLISHED A QUOTA OF ONLY 3,845 ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS PER YEAR.

THEREAFTER, ABETTED BY THE POLICIES OF THE FASCIST GOVERNMENT, IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S. DWINDLED TO A TRICKLE. NOW, GETTING TO AMERICA BECAME A MATTER OF SOME SKILL AND 'CONNECTION'.

HERE, THE OLD WORLD 'FAMILY' GROUPS AND SECRET SOCIETIES CAME INTO IMPORTANCE. FOR A FEE, THEY WANGLED VISAS, BRIBED OFFICIALS... OR ACTUALLY SMUGGLED MANY IMMIGRANTS INTO THE COUNTRY.

ONCE HERE, THEY WERE OFTEN INDENTURED TO THE SMUGGLING 'FAMILIES'... OR AT LEAST IN HEAVY DEBT FOR THEIR PASSAGE FEE. THESE FEES WERE INVARIABLY COLLECTED.

ONE OF THE GROUPS, WITH SICILIAN ROOTS WAS **'THE BLACK HAND'**. THEY, LIKE THE MAFIA, WERE OLD HANDS AT DISCIPLINE AND ENFORCEMENT.

A BLACK HAND IMPRINT ON ONE'S DOOR OR ON A LETTER WAS A NOTICE THAT WAS NOT TAKEN LIGHTLY.

ANGELO! YOU NOT EATIN' Y'SUPPER... WOTSAMATTER!
NUTHIN' I'M THINKIN'
WHATTA YOU GOT THERE?? LEMME LOOK!!
LEGGO MARIE... ITS JOOST A LETTER!
OH MY GOD... OH MY GOD!
IT'S A BLACK HAND!
WHY, ANGELO WHY US?
AAAAH YOU KNOW WHY, MARIE ... I'M.... WOT THEY CALL, ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT.. AND THE SOCIETY WANTS THE MONEY I OWE THEM FOR BRINGIN' ME OVER.. I DIDN'T SWIM HERE FROM PALERMO, Y'KNOW!!
HELLO ANGELO
MOUSTACHE PETE...
MOTHER OF GOD!

PLEASE DON'T HURT MY ANGELO PLEASE!
NOW... MISSIS FIORE.... DON'T MAKE NO TROUBLE! WE AINT GONNA DO NOTHIN'... BE NICE...
MAKE A CUPPA COFFEE MARIE!
I GOT NO JOB... WE GOT NO MONEY P-P-L-E-A-S-E PLEASE, SOB ...DON'T GIVE ME NO BLACK HAND!
BUT, YOU AIN'T PAID US NO MONEY FOR A WHOLE YEAR... THE SOCIETY GOTTA LIVE, TOO!
...SO, NOW... ANGELO! HOW YOU DOIN?
NOT SO GOOD, CONSIGLIERI... TIMES ARE HARD!
I CAN'T- I CAN'T- SOB
AAAAAH STOPP- YOU BAWLIN', Y'DUMB GUINEA, OR I'LL...
EASY, LUPO! NO ROUGH STUFF!

...TELL YOU WHAT, ANGELO... I GIVE YOU A JOB... A GUY NAME OF SHAFTSBURY LIVES IN THIS HOUSE, HE'S A RUNNER FOR SMITH & WHITE! ...YOU KNOW HIM??
HE LIVES ONNA 3RD FLOOR, BACK.
GET FRIENDLY WITH HIM... GET HIM TO TELL YOU WHENEVER HE DELIVERS NEGOTIABLE BONDS
WOT YOU GONNA DO?
IT'S NOT YOU BUSINESS, ANGELO!
YOU GONNA DO LIKE HE SAYS ...RIGHT, PISAN? BE NICE !!

ANGELO... YOU CAN'T DO THAT!! NO, NO! NO!
THEY GONNA ROB MISTER SHAFTSBURY... YOU KNOW THAT! THE COPS GONNA FINE OUT... WE'LL BE SENT BACK ... OR Y'GONNA GO TO JAIL .... A-N-G-E-L-O...
I KNOW I KNOW!
OH.... MARIE... EITHER WAY, I'M DEAD!
KNOCK KNOCK
EXCUSE ME, MARIE, IS ANGELO HOME?
OH, HELLO JACOB.... SHOO... HE'S INSIDE...
ANGELO, I NEED YOUR HELP!

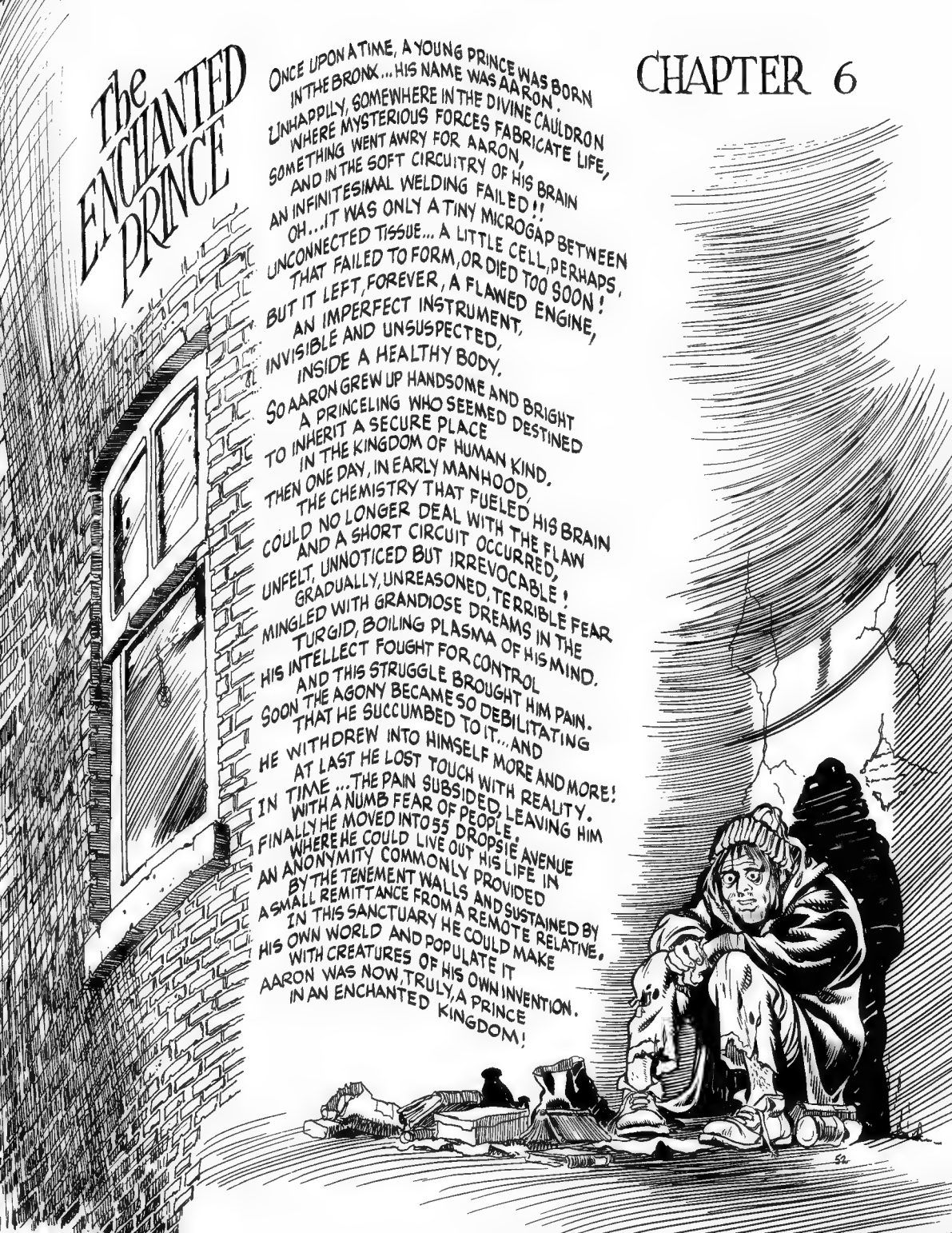
ME? ME HELP YOU JACOB?! MARRONE... I GOT NO MONEY, NO JOB... ALL I GOT IS TROUBLE
SO? WHO HASN'T?? LISTEN, ANGELO, I GOT A LITTLE JOB... IT'S SOME CARPENTRY! MAYBE WE CAN MAKE A FEW DOLLARS TOGETHER!
RABBI BENSOHN NEEDS I SHOULD BUILD HIM A ROOM. IT'S FOR HIS WIFE, BECKELEH..., Y'KNOW, SHE'S NOT RIGHT... IT'S GOING TO NEED STUDDING AND PLASTERING... HE CAN PAY... NOT MUCH, BUT HE'LL PAY!
BUT... TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WITH MY CONDITION, I DON'T THINK I SHOULD DO IT ALONE... YOU'RE A GOOD CARPENTER LIKE ME — SO I'M THINKING MAYBE WE CAN DO IT TOGETHER!
AAAAHH CAAAMAN, JACOB... ITS A LITTLE JOB! ... AINT GONNA BE MUCH TO SHARE!
NU?!.. SO, YOU CAN'T USE A FEW DOLLARS?? LISTEN, A DOLLAR-IS-A-DOLLAR IT'LL KEEP US ALIVE YET ANOTHER DAY!
BELIEVE ME, ANGELO! WHEN YOU'RE DROWNING YOU DON'T ASK A LOG FLOATING IN THE WATER "...HOW BIG??"
MAHMAMMIA, JACOB THE POET!
SO... IF SURVIVING IS POETRY... NU, I'LL BE A POET!

WELL, ANGELO?? YOU'LL DO IT? YES??
SHOO! JACOB, SHOO!
THANKS!
ACH..
MARIE, MARIE, I GOTTA JOB WITH JACOB. WE'LL MAKE SOME MONEY... NOW I CAN PAY SOMETHING TO THE SOCIETY... SO THEY GONNA LEMME ALONE!
MAANAGA!
MARIE... WOTSAMATTA ?!
WE GOT COCKROACHES AGAIN IN THE KITCHEN!! I SCRUB... I WASH... I CLEAN EVERY DAY... AND STILL, THEY COME BACK!
SPORCO! SPORCO! SOB.
51

The ENCHANTED PRINCE

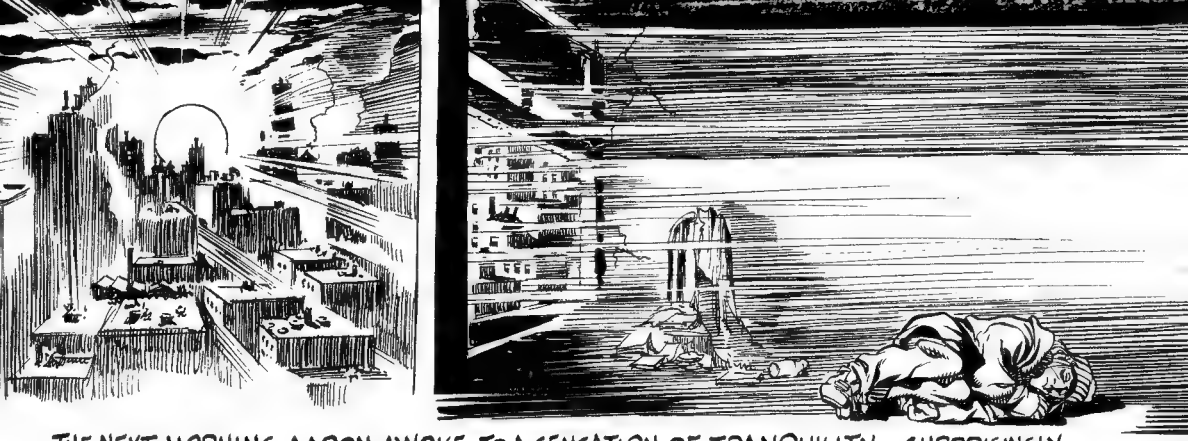
CHAPTER 6

ONCE UPON A TIME, A YOUNG PRINCE WAS BORN
IN THE BRONX... HIS NAME WAS AARON.
UNHAPPILY, SOMEWHERE IN THE DIVINE CAULDRON
WHERE MYSTERIOUS FORCES FABRICATE LIFE,
SOMETHING WENT AWRY FOR AARON,
AND IN THE SOFT CIRCUITRY OF HIS BRAIN
AN INFINITESIMAL WELDING FAILED!!
OH... IT WAS ONLY A TINY MICROGAP BETWEEN
UNCONNECTED TISSUE... A LITTLE CELL, PERHAPS,
THAT FAILED TO FORM, OR DIED TOO SOON!
BUT IT LEFT, FOREVER, A FLAWED ENGINE,
AN IMPERFECT INSTRUMENT,
INVISIBLE AND UNSUSPECTED,
INSIDE A HEALTHY BODY.
SO AARON GREW UP HANDSOME AND BRIGHT
A PRINCELING WHO SEEMED DESTINED
TO INHERIT A SECURE PLACE
IN THE KINGDOM OF HUMAN KIND.
THEN ONE DAY, IN EARLY MANHOOD,
THE CHEMISTRY THAT FUELED HIS BRAIN
COULD NO LONGER DEAL WITH THE FLAW
AND A SHORT CIRCUIT OCCURRED,
UNFELT, UNNOTICED BUT IRREVOCABLE!
GRADUALLY, UNREASONED, TERRIBLE FEAR
MINGLED WITH GRANDIOSE DREAMS IN THE
TURGID, BOILING PLASMA OF HIS MIND.
HIS INTELLECT FOUGHT FOR CONTROL
AND THIS STRUGGLE BROUGHT HIM PAIN.
SOON THE AGONY BECAME SO DEBILITATING
THAT HE SUCCUMBED TO IT... AND
HE WITHDREW INTO HIMSELF MORE AND MORE!
AT LAST HE LOST TOUCH WITH REALITY.
IN TIME... THE PAIN SUBSIDED, LEAVING HIM
WITH A NUMB FEAR OF PEOPLE.
FINALLY HE MOVED INTO 55 DROPSIE AVENUE
WHERE HE COULD LIVE OUT HIS LIFE IN
AN ANONYMITY COMMONLY PROVIDED
BY THE TENEMENT WALLS AND SUSTAINED BY
A SMALL REMITTANCE FROM A REMOTE RELATIVE.
IN THIS SANCTUARY HE COULD MAKE
HIS OWN WORLD AND POPULATE IT
WITH CREATURES OF HIS OWN INVENTION.
AARON WAS NOW, TRULY, A PRINCE
IN AN ENCHANTED KINGDOM!

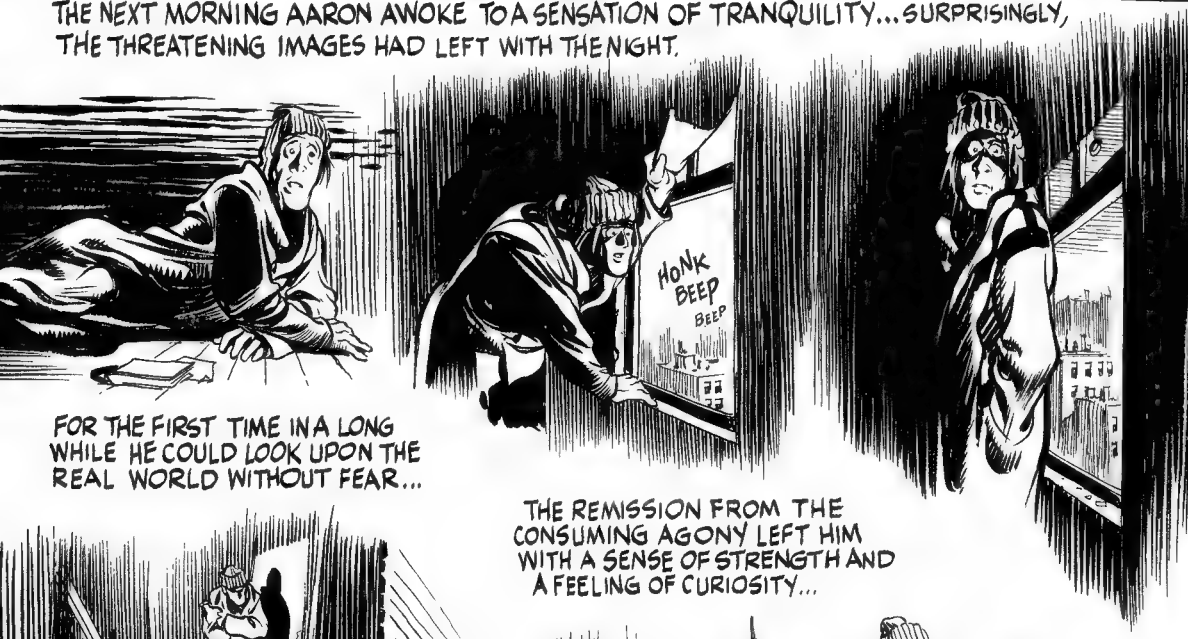


THERE, IN HIS KINGDOM HE LIVED....
IN A MURKY WORLD POPULATED BY THE GREAT, THE FAMOUS, AND THE POWERFUL—AARON ENGAGED IN AN ENDLESS DIALOGUE.
YOUR CALCULATIONS ARE NOT QUITE CORRECT! ...LET ME QUOTE FROM YOUR OWN THESIS...
my calculations concerning the special "LAWS OF LIGHT" which I wrote in....
OFTEN HE WROTE LONG LETTERS OF GARBLED BRILLIANCE AND CONVOLUTED REASONING ON SUBJECTS OF VAGUE IMPORT. LETTERS THAT WERE NEVER MAILED BUT WHICH, NONETHELESS, REFLECTED A STAGNANT POOL OF INTELLECT IN AN IMPRISONED MIND.
Dear Mr. President, It appears that your recent statement to the press on the state of this society are quite naive. Have you considered the forces of evil that
AND AS FOR "THEM"... THE INVISIBLE, SINISTER SPIES WHO MAINTAINED AN INEXPLICABLE SURVEILLANCE ON HIM ?? THEY NEEDED WATCHING!!
SO IN THIS MAGICAL COCOON, THIS SANCTUARY FROM REALITY, AARON DEALT WITH THE UNINVITED THOUGHTS AND THE ECTOPLASMIC IMAGES THAT FILTERED OUT OF THE GLOOM!
GO AWAY... GO AWAY!

SOMTIMES, IN THE NIGHT, WHEN HE CONTEMPLATED THE MAGNITUDE OF HIS INFIRMITY AARON ADDRESSED GOD...
WHY ME?! WHAT IN YOUR GRAND DESIGN... IN YOUR INFINITE CALCULUS... DID THIS TO ME... I TRY... BUT I CANNOT BREAK OUT OF THE IRON PRISON... MY THOUGHTS THAT START OUT SO CLEARLY END QUICKLY IN A HEAP... COLLAPSING OF THEIR OWN WEIGHT!
IT'S NOT FAIR! THERE MUST BE A SUPREME INTELLIGENCE. EVERYTHING ELSE IS SO GEOMETRICALLY ORDERED, FROM THE MOVEMENT OF THE PLANETS TO THE CONFIGURATION OF THE STRUCTURE OF MATTER... IF THERE IS A DIVINE SYMMETRY OF LIFE, THEN I AM A MISTAKE... YOUR MISTAKE!! HOW COULD YOU PERMIT THIS... HOW COULD YOU? .....
... AHH, THEN... THERE IS NO REASON! SO, THEREFORE, YOU ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN ALL THE OTHER CREATURES THAT INHABIT THIS ROOM!
AND, IF SO... THEN, YOU DO NOT EXIST!
THEN... GO!!
GO! GO!

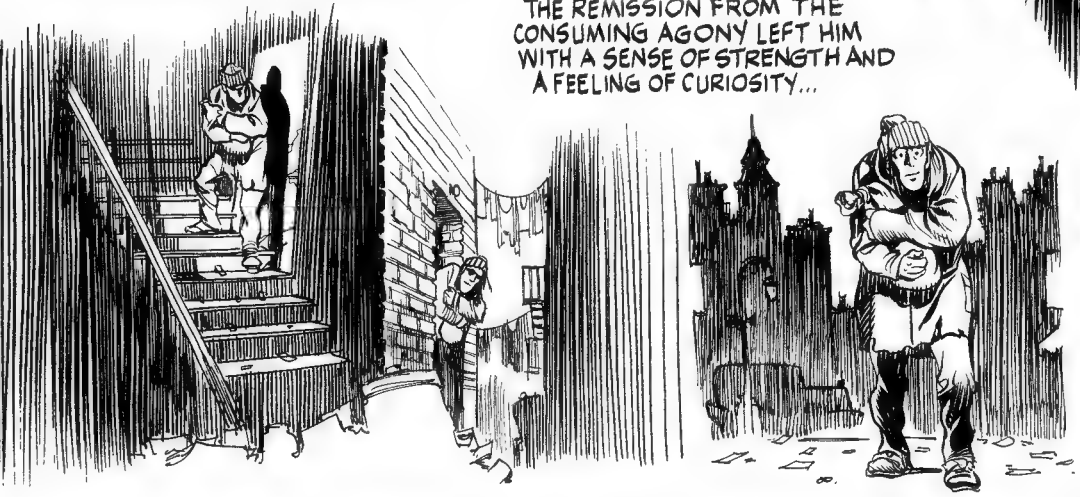


THE NEXT MORNING AARON AWOKE TO A SENSATION OF TRANQUILITY... SURPRISINGLY, THE THREATENING IMAGES HAD LEFT WITH THE NIGHT.



FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG WHILE HE COULD LOOK UPON THE REAL WORLD WITHOUT FEAR...

THE REMISSION FROM THE CONSUMING AGONY LEFT HIM WITH A SENSE OF STRENGTH AND A FEELING OF CURIOSITY...



NOW HE COULD GO OUT INTO THE REAL WORLD TO FIND REALITY

HOW DO Y'KNOW HE'S CARRY'N BONDS BOSS?
ANGELO'S WIFE, MARIA, SHE TOL' ME!! ... SEE, HE'S GOIN' UPTOWN !!
EEHH!! WOTS DOIN' WIT' ANGELO? I THOUGHT HE...
NAAAH... HE'S GOT A JOB NOW! SO, HE'S PAYIN' UP THE SOCIETY... SO, I HADDA TALK TO THE OL' LADY ... SHE CAME THROUGH!
THAT'S HIM... THAT'S SHAFTSBURY BOSS
OKAY, LUPO
SO, WOT WE DO?
HE'S TAKIN' THE SUBWAY... QUICK, YOU DRIVE UPTOWN TO 55 DROPSIE ... Y'LL GET THERE BEFORE HIM!! ... BETTER TO 'TAKE' HIM THERE!
SUPPOSE HE GIVES ME TROUBLE?
DO WHAT Y'GOTTA DO.. JUST GET THEM BONDS HE'S CARRYIN'
SHOO, BOSS!
DROPSIE

WHEEEEE I'M COMIN' THRU LOOK OUT...
...I SAID, BEAT IT! LEGGO MY ARM...GIT... L-E-G-G-O..L-E-G-G-O..Y'CRAZY SUMMABITCH, I GONNA PLUG YOU, LEGGO!
BANG!
BEAT IT ...NUT!

BECKY, I CAME HOME FOR LUNCH AS I PROMISED... WHAT'S HAPPENED HERE?
OH, ELTON, SOME HOODLUM SHOT HIMSELF IN THE ALLEY! COME ON UP. I'VE GOT LUNCH READY.
I CAN'T STAY LONG, BECKY, I'VE GOT THESE BONDS TO DELIVER TO THE UPTOWN BANK!
SIT DOWN ELTON, I MADE HOT CHICKEN SOUP.
58
TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE...

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WEEKLY COMIC BOOK

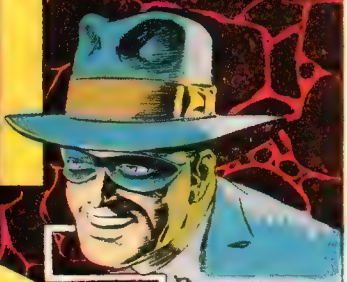
The Detroit News
THE HOME NEWSPAPER

3 COMPLETE STORIES

SUNDAY, JULY 21, 1940

THE SPIRIT

Will Eisner

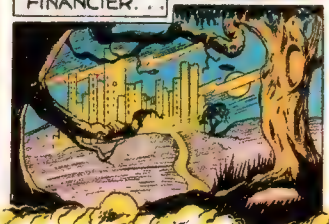


BELIEVED DEAD AND BURIED IN WILDWOOD CEMETERY, DENNY COLT, CRIMINOLOGIST, AWOKE FROM A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION... USING HIS GRAVE AS HIS HEADQUARTERS, HE CONTINUES HIS FIGHT AGAINST CRIME, AS *THE SPIRIT*.

BANG

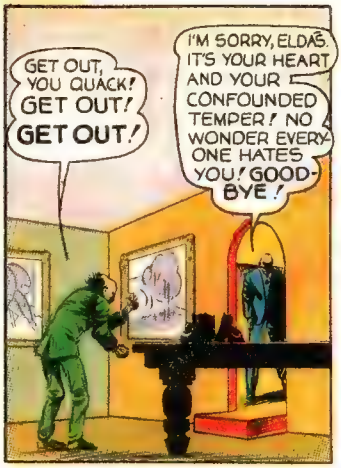
BANG

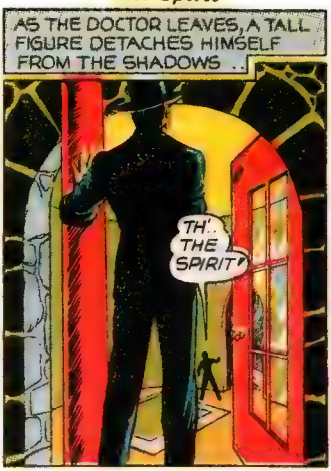
NORTH OF WILDWOOD CEMETERY, LIES THE CITY. ON CLEAR NIGHTS ONE CAN SEE THE TALL BUILDINGS THAT RISE ABOVE THEIR NEIGHBORS NEAR THE TOP OF THE TALLEST, A LIGHT OF ONE WINDOW CAN ALWAYS BE SEEN. IT IS THE APARTMENT OF ELDAS THAYER, THE OLD FINANCIER...

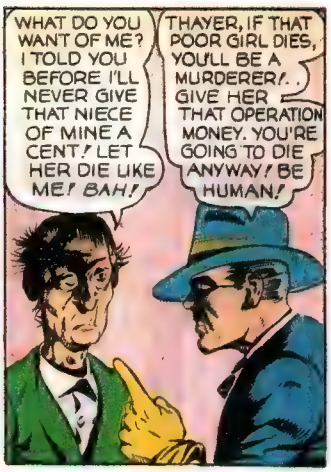


TONIGHT HE HAS A VISITOR, DR CLAY, THE FAMOUS HEART SPECIALIST.

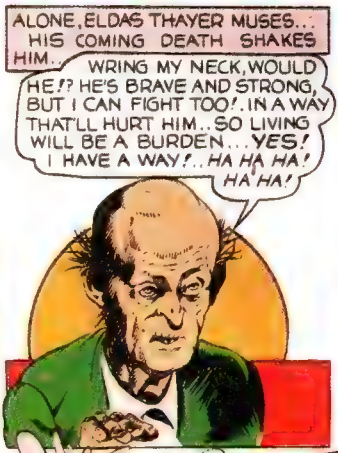
ELDAS THAYER, YOU ARE GOING *TO DIE* IN TWENTY FOUR HOURS!

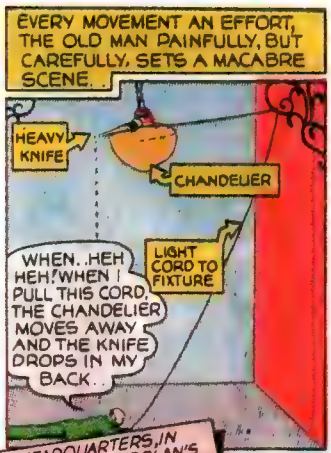

GET OUT, YOU QUACK! GET OUT! GET OUT!
I'M SORRY, ELDAS. IT'S YOUR HEART AND YOUR CONFOUNDED TEMPER! NO WONDER EVERYONE HATES YOU! GOOD-BYE!


AS THE DOCTOR LEAVES, A TALL FIGURE DETACHES HIMSELF FROM THE SHADOWS..
TH'.. THE SPIRIT!

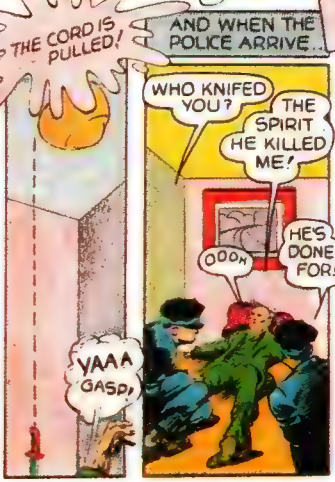

WHAT DO YOU WANT OF ME? I TOLD YOU BEFORE I'LL NEVER GIVE THAT NIECE OF MINE A CENT! LET HER DIE LIKE ME! BAH!
THAYER, IF THAT POOR GIRL DIES, YOU'LL BE A MURDERER!.. GIVE HER THAT OPERATION MONEY. YOU'RE GOING TO DIE ANYWAY! BE HUMAN!

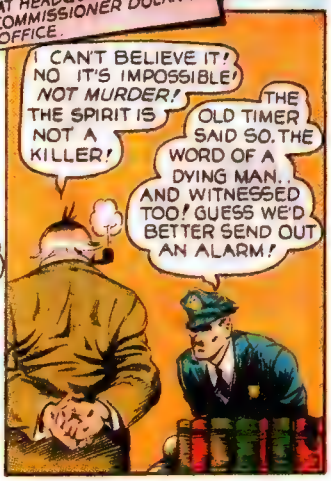
NO! AND THAT'S FINAL!
VERY WELL, THEN GOODBYE, AND I HOPE IN YOUR LAST HOURS, YOUR CONSCIENCE GIVES YOU NO PEACE! YOU OLD SKINFLINT! I'D LIKE TO WRING YOUR NECK!


ALONE, ELDAS THAYER MUSES.. HIS COMING DEATH SHAKES HIM..
WRING MY NECK, WOULD HE!? HE'S BRAVE AND STRONG, BUT I CAN FIGHT TOO!.. IN A WAY THAT'LL HURT HIM.. SO LIVING WILL BE A BURDEN... YES! I HAVE A WAY!.. HA HA HA! HA HA!


EVERY MOVEMENT AN EFFORT, THE OLD MAN PAINFULLY, BUT CAREFULLY, SETS A MACABRE SCENE..
HEAVY KNIFE
CHANDELIER
LIGHT CORD TO FIXTURE
WHEN.. HEH HEH! WHEN I PULL THIS CORD, THE CHANDELIER MOVES AWAY AND THE KNIFE DROPS IN MY BACK..

WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF I DIE NOW, OR IN TWENTY FOUR HOURS I'LL BE ABLE TO AVENGE MYSELF ON THE SPIRIT.. HE REPRESENTS GOOD, AND I, EVIL.. HA HA!


THE CORD IS PULLED!
AND WHEN THE POLICE ARRIVE..
WHO KNIFED YOU?
THE SPIRIT HE KILLED ME!
HE'S DONE FOR!
OOOH
YAAA GASP!

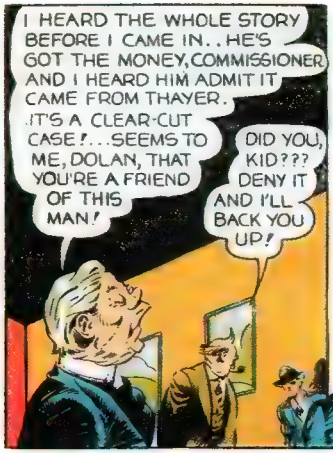

AT HEADQUARTERS, IN COMMISSIONER DOLAN'S OFFICE..
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! NO IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! NOT MURDER! THE SPIRIT IS NOT A KILLER!
THE OLD TIMER SAID SO. THE WORD OF A DYING MAN.. AND WITNESSED TOO! GUESS WE'D BETTER SEND OUT AN ALARM!

MEANWHILE, IN THE STREET BELOW
GUESS I'LL HAVE TO USE MY OWN MONEY, BUT I'LL GET DOLAN TO DONATE IT IN THAYER'S NAME. AS THE SPIRIT, I MIGHT HAVE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.

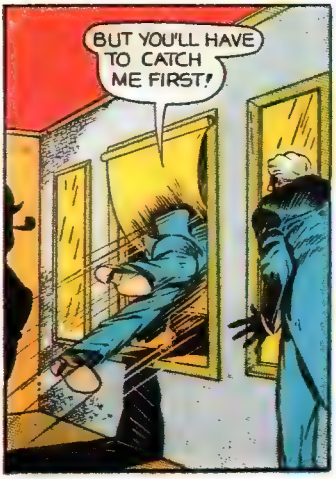
A FEW MINUTES LATER THE SPIRIT CLIMBS THROUGH DOLAN'S WINDOW.
HELLO, DOLAN! JUST BEEN TO VISIT THAYER..ER. HERE'S SOME MONEY HE .ER..GAVE ME TO DONATE TO HIS NIECE'S HOSPITAL BILL!
THE SPIRIT!

SPIRIT! WHY DID YOU DO IT? GOOD GOSH! YOU'RE NOT A KILLER!
DO WHAT? SAY, WHAT'S COME OVER YOU, DOLAN?

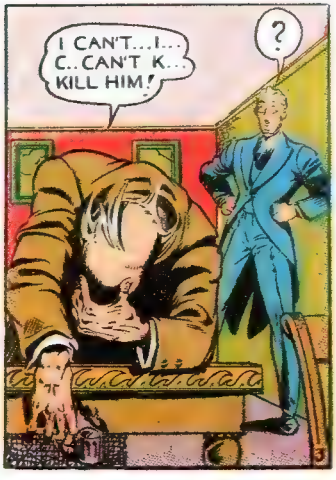
AT THAT MOMENT, THE DOOR FLIES OPEN.
THERE HE IS! ARREST HIM, COMMISSIONER!
MAYOR ALDRICH!!


I HEARD THE WHOLE STORY BEFORE I CAME IN.. HE'S GOT THE MONEY, COMMISSIONER AND I HEARD HIM ADMIT IT CAME FROM THAYER. IT'S A CLEAR-CUT CASE!...SEEMS TO ME, DOLAN, THAT YOU'RE A FRIEND OF THIS MAN!
DID YOU, KID??? DENY IT AND I'LL BACK YOU UP!

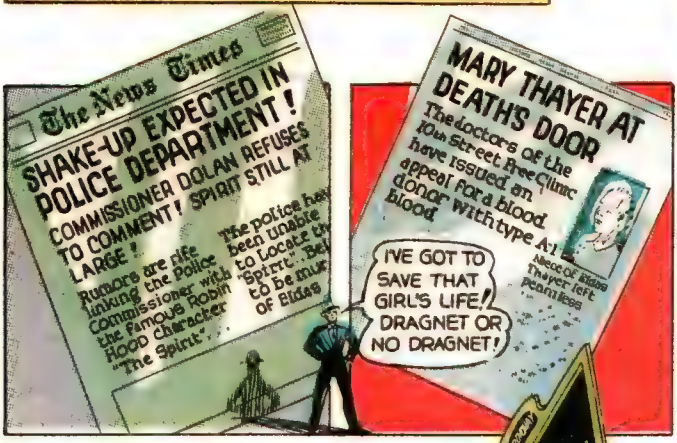
FOR A MOMENT THE SPIRIT HESITATES. HE MUST DECIDE TO PROTECT HIS FRIEND OR SAVE HIMSELF...AT LAST
YES! I KILLED HIM!

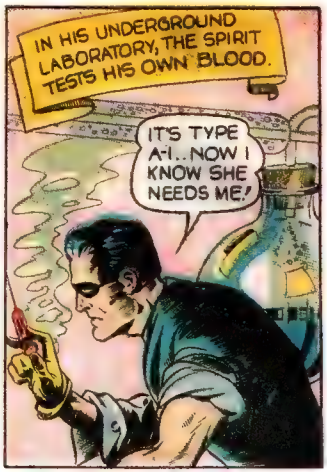

BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO CATCH ME FIRST!

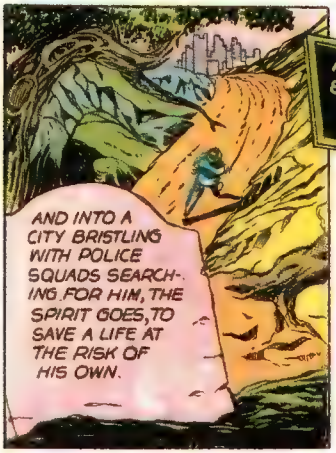
SHOOT HIM, DOLAN! SHOOT HIM! IT'S YOUR DUTY!

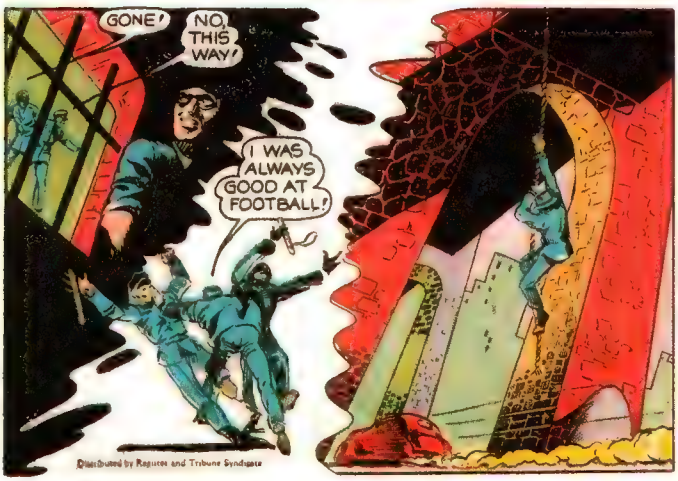

I CAN'T...I... C..CAN'T K... KILL HIM!
?

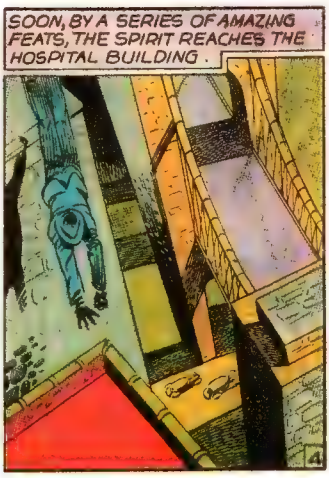
THE FOLLOWING DAYS RING WITH BLARING HEADLINES.

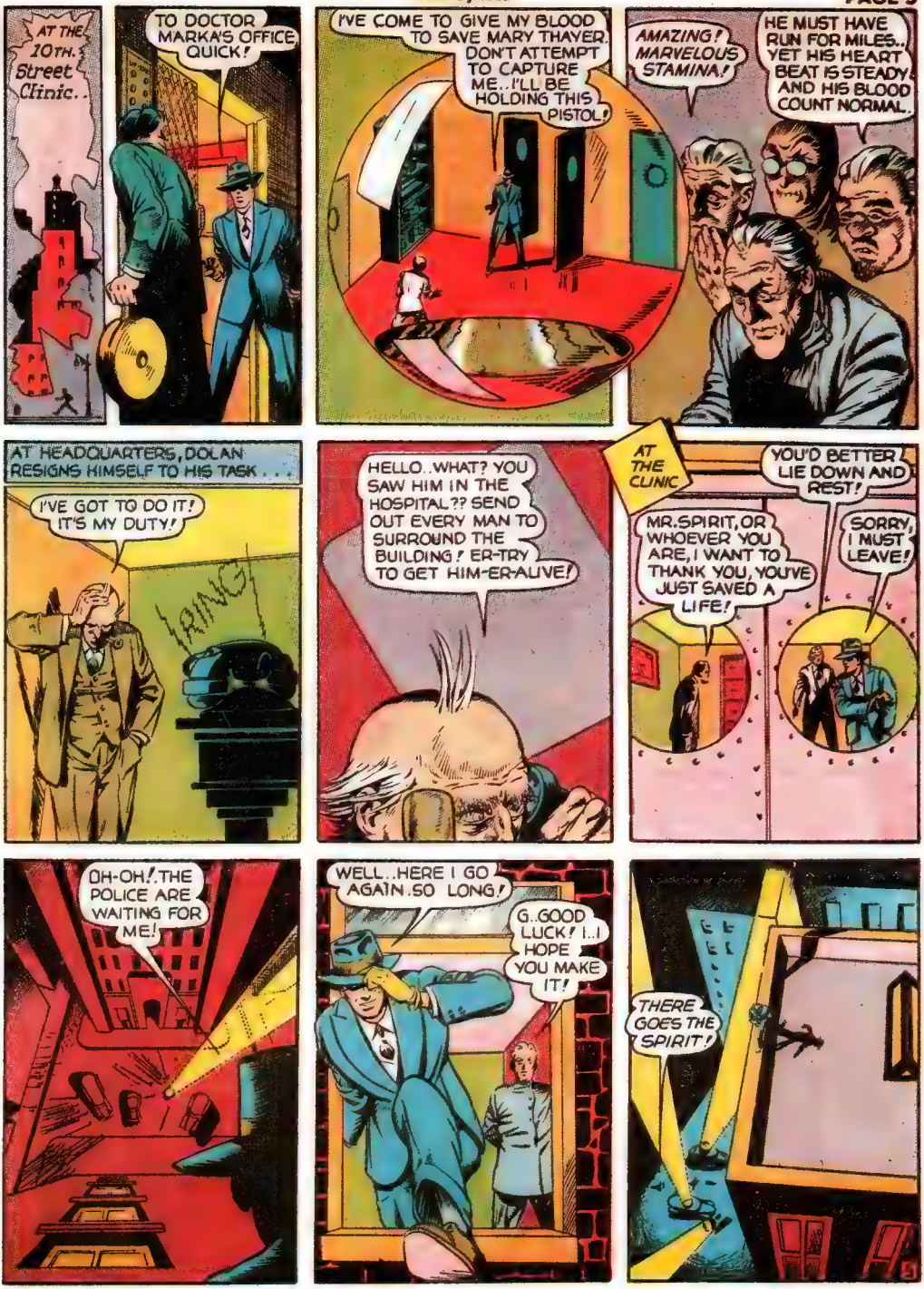

The News Times
SHAKE-UP EXPECTED IN POLICE DEPARTMENT!
COMMISSIONER DOLAN REFUSES TO COMMENT! SPIRIT STILL AT LARGE!
Rumors are rife linking the Police Commissioner with the famous Robin Hood character "The Spirit"...
The police have been unable to locate the "Spirit". Believed to be murderer of Eldes
MARY THAYER AT DEATH'S DOOR
The doctors of the 10th Street Free Clinic have issued an appeal for a blood donor with type A-1 blood
Niece of Elder Thayer left penniless
I'VE GOT TO SAVE THAT GIRL'S LIFE! DRAGNET OR NO DRAGNET!







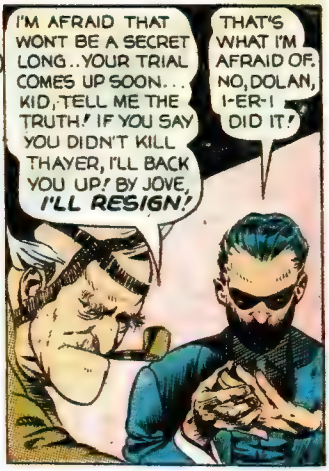



AT THE 10TH. Street Clinic..
TO DOCTOR MARKA'S OFFICE QUICK!
I'VE COME TO GIVE MY BLOOD TO SAVE MARY THAVER. DON'T ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE ME..I'LL BE HOLDING THIS PISTOL!
AMAZING! MARVELOUS STAMINA!
HE MUST HAVE RUN FOR MILES.. YET HIS HEART BEAT IS STEADY AND HIS BLOOD COUNT NORMAL.
AT HEADQUARTERS, DOLAN RESIGNS HIMSELF TO HIS TASK . . .
I'VE GOT TO DO IT! IT'S MY DUTY!
RING
HELLO..WHAT? YOU SAW HIM IN THE HOSPITAL?? SEND OUT EVERY MAN TO SURROUND THE BUILDING! ER-TRY TO GET HIM-ER-ALIVE!
AT THE CLINIC
YOU'D BETTER LIE DOWN AND REST!
MR. SPIRIT, OR WHOEVER YOU ARE, I WANT TO THANK YOU, YOU'VE JUST SAVED A LIFE!
SORRY, I MUST LEAVE!
OH-OH! THE POLICE ARE WAITING FOR ME!
WELL..HERE I GO AGAIN..SO LONG!
G..GOOD LUCK! I..I HOPE YOU MAKE IT!
THERE GOES THE SPIRIT!

WHEW! I MUST DO SOMETHING QUICK!
THE POLICE SEPARATE INTO GROUPS AND SCOUR THE BUILDINGS..
LOOK! THAT'S HIM HIDING THERE!
SHH.. WE'LL SNEAK UP ON HIM. THE COMMISSIONER SAID GET HIM ALIVE!
I GOT HIM!!
..A..A BROOM!?
MEANWHILE, WEAK FROM THE LOSS OF BLOOD, THE SPIRIT STAGGERS BLINDLY ON, DETERMINED NOT TO BE CAUGHT....
AN ALLEY LEADING OUT. IT MAY BE A CHANCE!
SUDDENLY, AS HE EMERGES FROM THE ALLEY, HE FINDS HIMSELF SURROUNDED.. ..A BATTERY OF SPOTLIGHTS IS TRAINED ON HIM....
THE SPIRIT IS CAPTURED AT LAST!
SORRY, KID, GOTTA TAKE YOU IN!

THE NEXT DAY, IN THE JAIL..
THE COMMISSIONER TO SEE YOU, SPIRIT.

HOW ARE YOU, KID?
FINE THANKS, DOLAN. THANKS FOR NOT LETTING THEM REMOVE MY MASK AND FIND OUT WHO I REALLY AM.

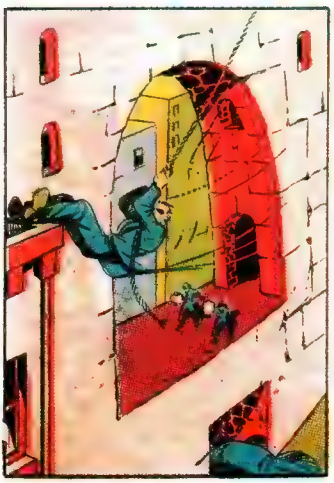

I'M AFRAID THAT WON'T BE A SECRET LONG..YOUR TRIAL COMES UP SOON... KID, TELL ME THE TRUTH! IF YOU SAY YOU DIDN'T KILL THAYER, I'LL BACK YOU UP! BY JOVE, I'LL RESIGN!
THAT'S WHAT I'M AFRAID OF. NO, DOLAN, I-ER-I DID IT!

OH, BEFORE YOU GO, I'D LIKE A DECK OF CARDS TO PLAY WITH.
SURE, KID (GULP) SO LONG. FROM NOW ON, WE'VE GOT TO BE ENEMIES!

LATER
I'VE GOT TO ESCAPE TONIGHT! NOW LET'S SEE..THIS PIPE LEG OF MY BED IS FINE!
NOW FOR A CANDLE. THE CARDS HAVE BEEN SOAKED LONG ENOUGH.
CARDS ARE POUNDED INTO A PULPY MASS.
AND THE HOMEMADE BOMB IS HEATED BY CANDLE.
STUFFED TIGHTLY INTO THE PIPE.

BOOM
LATE THAT NIGHT..

AND THE SPIRIT LEAPS TO FREEDOM.
TSK TSK..MADE A MESS OF DOLAN'S NICE JAIL!



SO LONG, DOLAN. HATE TO HAVE YOU THINK I'M A KILLER, BUT I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO QUIT YOUR JOB BECAUSE OF ME!

I'LL CONTINUE TO FIGHT CRIME, BUT FROM NOW ON WITHOUT THE AID OF THE POLICE!
AND ONCE AGAIN THE SETTING SUN IS A BACKGROUND FOR THE TALL FORM OF THE SPIRIT..AS HE HEADS DOWN ADVENTURE'S TRAIL...

LADY LUCK

A DEBUTANTE CRIME BUSTER BORED WITH SOCIAL LIFE SHE BECOMES A MODERN LADY ROBIN HOOD

By FORD DAVIS

World

DIVORCE GRANTED TO SYLVIA VAN HOFF

SOCIALLY PROMINENT FORMER SYLVIA TENEYCK RECEIVED HER DIVORCE FROM TAYLOR VAN HOFF TO-D...

Sun

CUSTODY OF VAN HOFF CHILD AWAITS DECISION

BUNNY VAN HOFF IS LIVING WITH GRANDMOTHER WHILE PARENTS BATTLE IN COURT FOR CUSTODY OF CHILD

World Sun

BUNNY VAN HOFF DISAPPEARS!

'LOST? KIDNAPPED?

OR HAS THE GIRL RUN AWAY WHILE PARENTS WRANGLE WITH ATTORNEYS FOR HER CUSTODY?

MY OWN BABY! I SHALL NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF IT'S MY FAULT!

I'LL DO ANY THING TO GET BUNNY BACK!

AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS

ANY NEWS ABOUT LITTLE BUNNY, CHIEF?

NOT A THING, FEENY... NOT THE SLIGHTEST HUNCH!

BUT SOMEONE ELSE HAS A HUNCH AND IS FOLLOWING IT THE MYSTERIOUS LADY LUCK

IF I REMEMBER RIGHT,..IT'S JUST ABOUT HERE!

BUNNY! BUNNY DEAR, DON'T BE AFRAID.. I'VE COME TO HELP YOU!

WHO WHO'S THERE?

I USED TO COME TO THIS SECRET CAVE WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL SO I GUESSED YOU'D BE HERE!

B...BUT I WANT TO GO HOME!

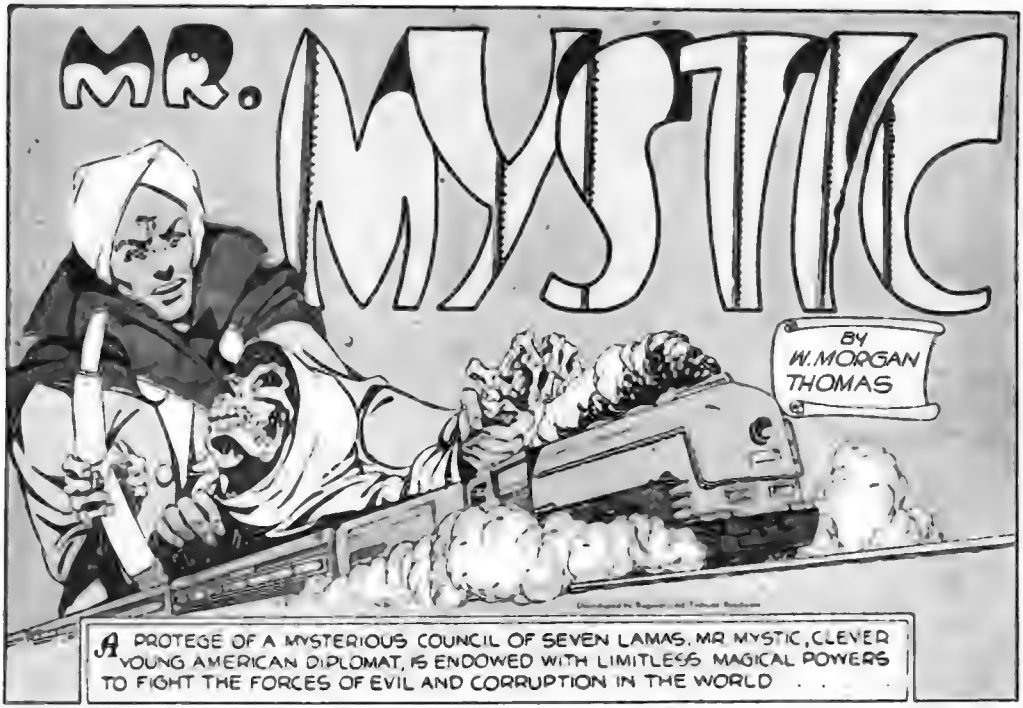
LADY LUCK GIVES THE CHILD A PENCIL AND PAPER

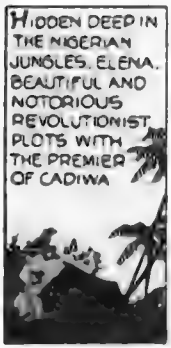
..IF YOU AND MUMMY.. GO HOME TOGETHER..I'LL GO HOME

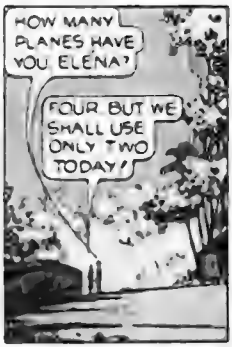
MEANWHILE, TWO HARRIED PARENTS VISIT HARDY MOORE
HAVE YOU SEARCHED EVERY WHERE CHIEF?
WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?
I'M DOING ALL I CAN YOU MUST BE CALM, BOTH OF YOU!
SUDDENLY OFFICER KENNY O'WYE BURSTS IN
CHIEF I GOT A NOTE IT'S FROM LADY LUCK AND BUNNY!
OH SHE'S IN ON THIS TOO!
DEAR DADDY: I'm so unhappy I'm writing you a note...
POOR LITTLE LONESOME DEAR MAYBE SHE IS RIGHT!
SHE WANTS US TO GO BACK TOGETHER AGAIN!
COME ON FELLAS WE CAN'T LOSE TIME WE HAVE TO GET LADY LUCK ON A KIDNAP CHARGE!
AT THAT MOMENT LADY LUCK AND BUNNY AT TOP SPEED
SHE DOES NOT SEE THE LUMBER TRUCK THAT SPEEDS AROUND THE BEND
THE SUDDEN CRASH, SCREAMING BRAKES, AND FRIGHTENED CRIES ECHO THROUGH THE WOODS AROUND
BUNNY HEARING THE NOISE COMES RUNNING OUT OF HER HIDEAWAY
LADY LUCK! OH ARE YOU HURT?
THE TRUCK DRIVERS SEE HER
THAT'S THE VAN I HOPE NO ONE'S BIG DOUGH BEHIND HER!
WELL WHAT ARE WE WAIT IN' FOR?
BOY THE REWARD FOR THIS BABY GETS BIGGER EVERY MINUTE!
SORRY MISS WE GOTTA GO!

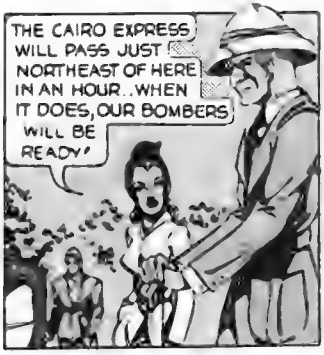
SOON AFTER, THE POLICE ARRIVE ON THE SCENE
NOW! WHAT A SMASH!
ANYONE HURT?
FEENY!! IT'S LADY LUCK'S HAT! SHE MUST BE.... D DEAD!
GOSH, CHIEF!
LATER.
LADY LUCK HAS BEEN KILLED... YOUR ONLY CHANCE OF BRINGING BUNNY BACK IS TO ANNOUNCE YOUR RECONCIL'ATION!
WELL, SYLVIA?
WE HAVE BEEN THOUGHT-LESS AND SELFISH, HAVEN'T WE?
MY DARLING... WHAT A BITTER LESSON WE'VE LEARNED
COME ON, FEENY WE AREN'T NEEDED HERE!
AT THE KIDNAPPERS' HIDE-OUT
SYLVIA AND TAYLOR VAN HOFF ARE BACK TOGETHER AGAIN BUT WHERE IS BUNNY?
YES DEAR, YOU WILL SOON. JUST A LITTLE LONGER!
I WANT TO GO HOME, LADY LUCK I WANT TO SEE THEM!
THEY'RE HOLDING US UNTIL THE REWARD GROWS LARGER, BUT...
SHHH BUNNY!" STAY IN THE CORNER!
GUESS WE CAN TAKE HER BACK NOW!
COME RIGHT IN, GENTLEMEN!
HAVE A LITTLE JIU JITSU ON ME, BOYS!
LADY LUCK PULLS A SWIFT TRICK...
3

FRIGHTENED, LITTLE BUNNY CHASES OUT IN SEARCH FOR HELP
BUT THE LADY SEEMS TO BE HOLDING HER OWN
BUNNY REACHES THE STREET
WHAT TH'?
POLICE! MR. POLICEMAN
BUT, SHE'S DONE!
SHE CERTAINLY DID A GOOD JOB ON THIS BUNCH!
SOON THE FATHER, MOTHER AND CHILD ARE HAPPILY RE-UNITED..
OH, MY BABY!
AND IT WAS LADY LUCK WHO SAVED ME!
LADY LUCK?! BUT SHE'S DEAD!
NO!
EVER SEE A GHOST, CHIEF?
HOLD IT, FOLKS, FOR A NICE FAMILY PICTURE!
HERE'S YOUR CAMERA, CHUCK. I GOT THE PICTURE!
GEE, THANKS.. THEY WOULDN'T LET ME!
D..DID Y..YOU SEE WHAT I SAW?
YEAH..IT'S UNCANNY!
Come they lived happily ever after
Lady Luck


MR. MYSTIC
BY W. MORGAN THOMAS
A PROTEGE OF A MYSTERIOUS COUNCIL OF SEVEN LAMAS, MR MYSTIC, CLEVER YOUNG AMERICAN DIPLOMAT, IS ENDOWED WITH LIMITLESS MAGICAL POWERS TO FIGHT THE FORCES OF EVIL AND CORRUPTION IN THE WORLD . . .


HIDDEN DEEP IN THE NIGERIAN JUNGLES, ELENA, BEAUTIFUL AND NOTORIOUS REVOLUTIONIST, PLOTS WITH THE PREMIER OF CADIWA


HOW MANY PLANES HAVE YOU ELENA?
FOUR BUT WE SHALL USE ONLY TWO TODAY!


THE CAIRO EXPRESS WILL PASS JUST NORTHEAST OF HERE IN AN HOUR..WHEN IT DOES, OUR BOMBERS WILL BE READY!

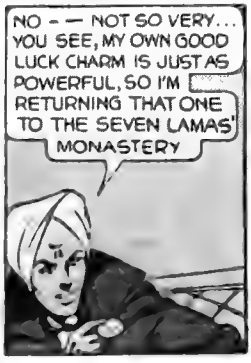
WE CAN'T FAIL! AS SOON AS KING BAHROUD IS DEAD, YOU CAN STEP IN AND DECLARE MARTIAL LAW!

SEE? OUR PLANES WILL BOMB THE TRAIN HERE. LISTEN! THEY'RE TAKING OFF!

YOU'D BETTER GET BACK TO THE CAPITAL. I'LL SEE YOU IN A WEEK TO COLLECT MY REWARD!

MEANWHILE

THAT'S RIGHT, KING BAHROUD THAT AMULET PROTECTS ITS WEARER FROM ALL HARM!
YOU MUST VALUE IT HIGHLY, MR. MYSTIC!


NO - — NOT SO VERY... YOU SEE, MY OWN GOOD LUCK CHARM IS JUST AS POWERFUL, SO I'M RETURNING THAT ONE TO THE SEVEN LAMAS' MONASTERY

WHY DON'T YOU STAY WITH ME A FEW DAYS BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR CHINA MR. MYSTIC?
THANK YOU, YOUR MAJESTY, I'D BE GLAD TO.
AS THE TRAIN SPEEDS OVER THE ARKUT CANYON, TWO DIVE BOMBERS ROAR OUT OF THE SOUTH AND CAREFULLY JOCKEY INTO POSITION ABOVE IT.
SUDDENLY, ONE DIVES.
INSIDE THE TRAIN, PANDEMONIUM BREAKS LOOSE AS THE CARS AND RAILS ARE BLOWN INTO A MASS OF TWISTED STEEL.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, KING BAHROUD?
YYES...IT'S A GOOD THING I HAD THIS AMULET IN MY HAND!
THERE'S THE CAUSE OF THIS! WAIT HERE FOR ME!
JUST A MINUTE, MY FRIEND, I WANT TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS!
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS? WHO IS YOUR LEADER?
WE WERE TOLD TO KILL THE KING, SO PREMIER GRAHVIN CAN DECLARE MARTIAL LAW AND TAKE OVER THE KINGDOM AS DICTATOR. ELENA IS OUR CHIEF!
ELENA AGAIN! WILL I NEVER BE RID OF THAT WOMAN! I MUST STOP HER ONCE AND FOR ALL!

PROJECTING HIMSELF INTO THE FOURTH DIMENSION, MR. MYSTIC SOON ARRIVES AT ELENA'S HIDEOUT...
WE MEET AGAIN ELENA! THIS TIME YOU WILL NOT ESCAPE!
YOUR PLAN TO ASSASSINATE THE KING FAILED, BUT YOU SHALL PAY FOR THE DEATH OF ALL THE OTHERS!
BAH! I AM NOT AFRAID OF YOUR POWERS! YOU'LL NEVER CATCH ME!
OH, YES I WILL!
AS MR. MYSTIC GRABS ELENA'S ARM, SHE CRASHES AGAINST A TABLE, KNOCKING OVER A LAMP.
JARRED BY THE CRASH, A HEAVY VASE FALLS FROM THE RAFTERS ON MR. MYSTIC'S HEAD.
HE'S KNOCKED OUT! OH! THE LAMP HAS SET THE PLACE AFIRE!
I'LL HAVE TO WARN THE PREMIER!
WHILE ELENA TAKES OFF IN ONE OF THE TWO REMAINING PLANES, THE GREEDY FLAMES CREEP CLOSER TO MR. MYSTIC'S FORM.
BACK IN THE CAPITAL, GRAHVIN ADDRESSES A HUGE CROWD, TELLING THEM OF THEIR KING'S UNFORTUNATE DEATH.
..NOW I AM YOUR LEADER!
YOU MUST REALIZE THAT I AM INFALLIBLE..MY WORD IS LAW! I WILL TOLERATE NO OPPOSITION, AND ANYONE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO DISOBEY ME WILL BE SHOT!

MEANWHILE, THE FLAMES QUICKLY ENVELOP THE SHACK AND EAT VICIOUSLY INTO THE DRY GRASS.
(COUGH) I'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE FAST! (COUGH)
RAISING HIS ARMS, MR. MYSTIC COMMANDS A CLOUD OF VAPOR TO SURROUND HIM FROM HEAD TO FOOT.
SAFE WITHIN THE VAPOR, HE WALKS CALMLY THROUGH THE FLAMES.
AT LEAST THEY WERE NICE ENOUGH TO LEAVE ME A PLANE!
I'LL PICK UP THE KING AND CATCH ELENA AT THE CAPITAL!
A FEW MINUTES LATER, ELENA ARRIVES AT THE CAPITAL AND RUSHES INTO THE PREMIER'S OFFICE . . .
QUICK, GRAHVIN! THERE'S NOT A SECOND TO LOSE! THE KING LIVES!
OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO SEND OUT THE SOLDIERS AND BEAT THE PEOPLE INTO SUBMISSION BEFORE HE RETURNS!
WELL? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, GENERAL? CALL OUT YOUR TROOPS!
B-BUT, IF THE K-KING- YES, SIR, RIGHT AWAY!
BEWILDERED AS TO WHOM TO TAKE HIS ORDERS FROM, THE GENERAL HEADS FOR THE DOOR, ONLY TO STOP IN AMAZED AWE AS MR. MYSTIC AND HIS KING APPEAR.

YOU WORTHLESS SNAKE! YOU WOULD LISTEN TO THAT DOG AND BETRAY ME! I SHOULD HAVE YOU KILLED!
MERCY!
I FORGIVE YOU, FOR YOU SERVED ME WELL! NOW, SEIZE THOSE TWO!
SEEKING TO ESCAPE, THE PREMIER TAKES TO HIS HEELS, BUT MR MYSTIC GESTURES
UH! I'M TURNING TO STONE!
VERY CLEVER, MR MYSTIC, BUT I STILL SAY YOU'LL NEVER GET ME!
GLADOS! STOP HER! MY MAGIC IS POWERLESS OVER HER!
EXCITED, THE GENERAL RAISES HIS GUN AND FIRES BLINDLY.
ELENA! ELENA!
FOOL! I WANTED HER TAKEN ALIVE! GET THE DOCTOR! HURRY!
I'M AFRAID THIS IS IT, MR. MYSTIC! M-MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT WE WEREN'T ON THE SAME SIDE..WE WOULD HAVE MADE SUCH A GOOD PAIR.. SUCH A.....
HURRY, DOCTOR!
QUICKLY ELENA IS RUSHED TO THE HOSPITAL, AND FOR TWO HOURS MR MYSTIC ANXIOUSLY AWAITS THE DOCTOR'S REPORT
ELENA IS SHE..?
SHE'LL LIVE IT WAS JUST A SEVERE FLESH WOUND!
THANK HEAVEN! SHE IS AN OPPONENT, BUT A BRAVE ONE AND I ADMIRE HER. I MUST GO NOW, KING BAHROUD I LEAVE HER IN YOUR HANDS UNTIL I RETURN SOME DAY
ADIEU!

PRESERVING A SENSE OF WONDER...

BERKELEY
2461 Telegraph 94704
415/845-4091

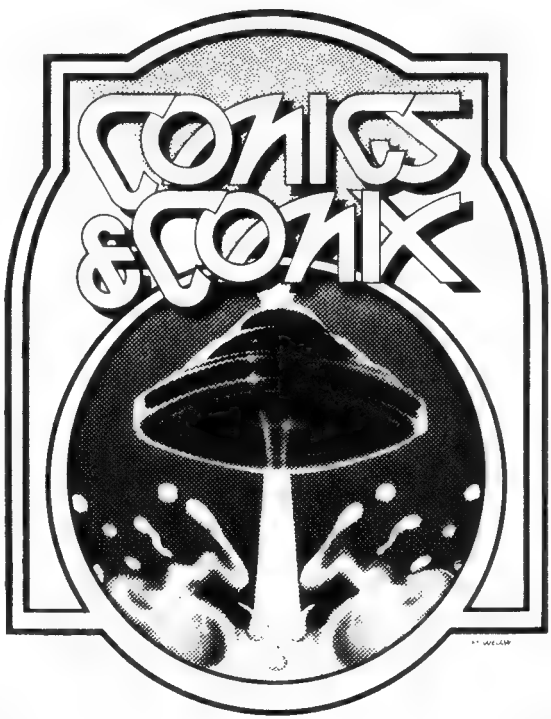
CITRUS HEIGHTS
6135 Sunrise 95610
916/969-0717

SACRAMENTO
921 K Street Mall 95814
916/442-5142

SAN FRANCISCO
700 Lombard 94133
415/982-3511

SAN FRANCISCO
650 Irving 94122
415/665-5888

PALO ALTO
515 Cowper 94301
415/328-8100



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SHOP TALK:

Will Eisner & Gill Fox discuss LOU FINE

Louis K. Fine in 1941.

Photo by Gill Fox

EISNER: I'm here in the Connecticut studio and home of Gill Fox. Gill was a close personal friend and a business acquaintance of Lou Fine. It is to discuss Lou, his personality and his work that we decided to get together for this Shop Talk. Sometime between 1937 and 1938 we, at Eisner & Iger, hired a young artist named Lou Fine. I don't remember who brought him into the shop. We often advertised for artist-illustrators. There were not many career comic book people floating around in those days because the field was so new. Therefore, most recruiting was done from the related fields such as pulp, book and magazine illustration. In fact, a lot of them came from the fine art field; people like Alex Blum and Martin DeMuth. I don't even remember Lou's educational background. He might have come right out of school, perhaps from Pratt, like Chuck Mazoujian and Bob Powell. In any event, he joined the staff on salary. Now, Gill, where did *we* first meet? Was it through "Busy" Arnold's Quality Comics Group?

FOX: Actually, no. You probably have forgotten. I was probing for work from the time I was 18, and I think I hit you just after you merged with [Jerry] Iger. You had the Phoenix Syndicate and I walked in. I had an interview.

EISNER: We had a newspaper syndicate called Universal Phoenix Feature Syndicate. We were producing and selling strips to weekly newspapers —a feisty little venture that was short-lived.

FOX: Right. I firmly believe that what I showed was not good enough and nothing ever came of it. My material was undeveloped. That was the very first time we met.

EISNER: That office was on 42nd street... right across the street from the *New York Daily News* building.

FOX: Yes! Subsequently I kept working and my art developed to a saleable point. I started freelancing to Quality Comics. I created features. I did sports cartoons first and then I created "Wun Cloo" and just about that time Ed Cronin, then the editor, told me they were moving to Stamford, sounded very pleasant and...

EISNER: Wun Cloo was a Chinese character, right?

FOX: They had a lot of Chinese detective characters in the movies at that time. Quality was moving or expanding and Ed said, "I need an assistant in Stamford." I was unable in the depths of the depression to find a steady job in comic books so I took it and moved to Stamford. I rented a room and lived up there, helping Ed. I enjoyed it. I was with Ed for a year and a half, then Ed left to become an editor for Hillman, the compa-

ny that published *Airboy*.

EISNER: I knew Ed Cronin well. Wasn't he up there as Quality Comics editor just after George Brenner died?

FOX: No, this was before George Brenner. George was doing "The Clock" for us at the time. Busy Arnold took me to lunch and he promoted me to editor. He said, "Ed's quitting and if you want the job, you can have it." I was quite surprised but by that time I had enough experience. Busy needed an editor immediately. Busy would watch over my shoulder very carefully. George Brenner was still working freelance for us..They —I think I can say this— they were drinking buddies.

EISNER: [laughs] I remember that well.

FOX: That's the way it was. George was a typical Irish personality guy. Anyway I really enjoyed that period. Those two years had a tremendous effect on my life. At the same time I was doing covers, *Doll Man* covers, at night at home. I'd do the covers, edit during the day, letter and everything else. God, half a dozen things.

EISNER: *Doll Man* was Lou Fine's feature.

FOX: That's right. That's what I'm getting at. At that point they had just started *Doll Man* before Ed Cronin quit.

EISNER: All right, now we get to Lou Fine. *Doll Man* came out of the Eisner & Iger shop. Lou Fine did it. In the fall of '39 Busy Arnold and Henry Martin came to see me. Henry Martin was sales manager of The Register & Tribune Syndicate. And they said, "We want to do a newspaper comic book, a comic supplement." It was called a ready-print in those days. They wanted me to produce it. Busy said the condition was that I produce it independently. This obliged me to make a decision. So, I offered Jerry Iger the option to exercise the buy-sell clause in our partnership agreement. He elected to buy me out with the proviso that I would not "raid" the shop. I would be restricted to hiring no more than three or four people out of the Eisner & Iger staff. In the studio at that time there were about 14 artists and writers working full-time—salaried. So I asked for Lou Fine, Bob Powell and Chuck Mazoujian. They all wanted to come along with me.

FOX: This was the latter part of '39? You had intentions of totally producing that supplement. You needed a couple more features?

EISNER: I needed two other features. I created *Lady Luck* and *Mr. Mystic* and I needed somebody to do those. Also, as part of the deal with Busy Arnold, I was to create a couple of comic books — *Military Comics* and so forth. We set up a company, an actual partnership. I wanted to be a publisher now. For a young man, I struck a very good business deal, including ownership of the strip, *The Spirit* was to be copyrighted in Arnold's name but we had a contract saying that any time the deal broke up the entire property would revert to me. We were 50/50 partners. The reason it had to be published with his name on the masthead was becuase if I should go into the army and get killed, the syndicate feared that they would lose newspaper clients. I wouldn't allow the syndicate to have the copyright. In the opening negotiation, The Register & Tribune said everything they had was copyrighted by them. It was traditional. But I said, "No way!" I won out by working a deal with Arnold as the buffer. They couldn't argue with that.

FOX: You may have generated the first syndicated material where the artist owned his feature!

EISNER: Perhaps... in the comic book field. Anyhow, things are quite different today. But the important thing about this discussion is to set out the climate that prevailed around this venture at that time. So, at any rate, Lou wanted to join me... he didn't want to stay at the Eisner & Iger shop after I left. That's a clue to his psyche.

FOX: I understand what happened, yeah.

EISNER: It's not too hard to understand. Lou wanted freedom to work in his own way on features of his own making. Eisner & Iger was a "packaging" shop making and delivering complete ready-for-camera comic books to the publisher "to order" so to speak. The publisher specified the main thrust of the book, generally, to fit into his line. In the case of Fiction House, each title had to follow the formula set by their earlier pulp titles. In the case of other publishers, to fit their competitive strategy. But in this new set-up, we were free to create our own ideas. So, Lou would now have only me to deal with. This, as I recall, was the underlying reason that moved the whole group. You must remember that this was still at a time when comic book artists had little in the way of today's intellectual freedom or individual professional identity with what they produced. Bob Powell wanted to come because he wanted to write his own stuff. He also wanted more freedom. Bob took over *Mr. Mystic*. Chuck Mazoujian wanted to come. He had a kind of illustrator's outlook. He came out of Pratt Institute. He did *Lady Luck*. Later he left to go into advertising art. Nick Viscardi wanted to come too so I think I wound up with three or four guys. I rented an apartment in Tudor City on the fifth floor. It was a two room apartment. The living room was the studio itself. We lined up drawing boards and then finally I got Tex Blaisdell and Dick French, a writer who was Blaisdell's brother-in-law, to write for us. We started out with two monthly magazines, *Military Comics* and *Uncle Sam Comics*, in addition to doing *The Spirit* section. After a bit David Berg joined the shop too.

FOX: How many pages was *The Spirit*?

EISNER: Sixteen pages every week. *The Spirit* itself was eight pages, *Mr. Mystic* was four pages and *Lady Luck* four pages. Later *The Spirit* dropped to seven pages to make room for advertising on the last page. To this day I can't believe we were able to do it without missing a deadline. Lou and I worked well together, I believe. At least that's my perception. Back in the Eisner & Iger days I layed out a lot of pages for story-telling. So by now we had generally agreed-upon standards. Like the Walt Disney or any other studio, there was a creative philosophy characteristic of the shop. I guess I kind of ran it like a ball club. [chuckle]

FOX: Obviously you did because I understand you were the one that came up with the Japanese brush. Nobody had thought of that. You evidently taught Lou because that thing was not easy to handle.

EISNER: It wasn't really teaching; more like demonstrating or recommending. I was kind of a player-manager. You know, I can see it to this day. Lou had short fingers. [Fox laughs] He held the brush with the two fingers, with the forefinger and the second finger.

FOX: That's right!

EISNER: You remember that? Two fingers holding that brush. He was a very strong guy.

FOX: Strong top.

EISNER: Well, he worked out with weights constantly to compensate for the bad leg. As you know, he was a very quiet, very strong guy. I was very much into Japanese art at the time. It was so similar to comics. Using an oriental brush for comics requires great dexterity. Its hair has no resilience. It was like a wet rag.

FOX: But a magnificent line.

EISNER: Lou was the only guy in the shop beside me that used the Japanese brushes. When he picked it up, he put me to shame. He began to feather with it. I was good at it, but not as good as Lou. What a line! It's because of the Japanese brush —I don't know how many people know this— that Lou and I began to draw saliva lines when guys had their mouths open. Remember those saliva lines? It is now very fashionable. [Fox laughs] Everybody thinks it was a great technique innovation, but it was simply because of the Japanese brushes. It's because the Japanese brush tip doesn't hold ink long enough. Besides, the ones we used weren't made of better sable hair. In practice you have to hold it vertical constantly, so it really takes a skill. We used to play around a little and I'd try to do tricks with the brush. Lou had great patience.

FOX: Now I understand why it's necessary to have the strong hand to hold it in position. If this gets out there's going to be...

EISNER: ...a run on Japanese brushes? I doubt it. I still have some and I still use them occasionally. But they slow you up. There's really nothing like a good sable brush for swift, clean lines, crisp feathering and speed. And here's a bit of trivia: Lou kept his metal ferrule clean while I always taped mine. Still do, for a better grip and more control. And while we're on the subject of how Fine worked, he and I both used a mechanical pencil to pencil the artwork. So much for tools. As for layout, Lou liked to work from a breakdown of stories rather than a script. Later, as we got busier, he had to deal with scripts.

FOX: I can understand that.

EISNER: Now, as to my memory of how he looked. Lou was a very quiet person. He wore steel rim glasses. Thin nose. Sensitive nostrils. High forehead. Thin. Red hair. Red cheeks. And he had a very shy kind of smile, which at first I thought was just a shy smile. But I found out that it said something else. It was a way of showing anger. When he was angry he had a kind of sad smile. But I never saw him *really* angry.

FOX: No, I didn't either. I shouldn't say that. We did touch on some political philosophy one time. Of course it was during the depression and it was the point of socialism as compared to anti-socialism and so forth. It didn't surprise me. He really got intent, rather than angry, on the subject. This was in the studio in the beginning when I just got to know him. As I got to know him better, he was the kind of person I grew up with, the kind of people I knew in Brooklyn and New York that you could tell things to.

EISNER: Wasn't that happening in the studios in those days? In 1940, '41, at Tudor City, our conversations reflected the times. They were always political and philosophical. You didn't know Lou then, correct?

FOX: Not at that time, no.

EISNER: When I was drafted I went up to see Busy and talked to him about the problem of my going into the Army and he said, "Well, we better move the studio up here to Stamford, to the Gurley Building." Remember the Gurley Building? So we took space right next door to Busy's office on the same floor and began moving the shop. As a matter of fact, I remember we set up a fund to help the artists who wanted to move up there, to pay a down payment on mortgages for houses.

FOX: I didn't know this.

EISNER: Yeah. So when Lou went up to Stamford, you were already there. You were part of Busy Arnold's operation. Busy had two shops. There was Busy Arnold's crowd and there was Will Eisner's crowd.

The R
CHARGED WITH STRATOSPHERIC LIGHTNING, HAPPY TERRILL, ACE REPORTER, HAS BECOME THE INVINCIBLE RAY.....
WHO IS MONSIEUR LE RAT? IS THE BRAVE ARMY OF FREE FRANCE BEING BETRAYED BY OFFICERS IN THE HIGH COMMAND??

SPLASH PAGE—*The Ray* by E. Lectron (Lou Fine), 1941. (Gill Fox collection)

© 1984 DC Comics.

FOX: I think I can almost pinpoint when we became close friends. I admired Lou from the first time I set eyes on one of the first *Ray* pages he ever did. *The Ray* appeared in *Smash Comics.* When I saw the first set I knew I was looking at an unusual talent. Immediately I wanted to meet the person and know who that was. Lou came into the Stamford Studio with your group. He rented a nice apartment even though we were still in the depression. I wasn't making that much as an editor but Lou, evidently because of the set up, was going to make more money. We had them over for dinner, Lou and his wife Mary, and that was the beginning of a close friendship. Helen, my wife, immediately took to Mary as I had taken to Lou. Mary said, "I don't know what I'm going to do. The apartment is so big." Helen said, "Forget it. I'll come over, wash the walls." Helen went over, washed the walls and they became buddies, Mary and her. It was great because we didn't have any friends in Stamford. Jack Cole, Tony DiPreta, they all lived in that area and that group became a close knit social group, except you could get a lot closer to Lou. Nobody ever got real close to Jack Cole.

EISNER: Jack was a very affable guy.

FOX: Oh, yes!

EISNER: Anyway, you were editor then.

FOX: I was editor. As a matter of fact, I should remind you, somehow I got called into Tudor City to help on backgrounds on *The Spirit* dailies and while I was working there, Busy Arnold called you on the phone. This was right at the point when Cronin quit and you came to me and said, "One minute you're working for me and the next minute I'm working for you!" And I said, "What do you mean?" And you said, "Busy is making you editor." That was the first I heard of it. Do you recall that?

EISNER: I don't remember it, but...

FOX: Well, it was a big surprise to me. I can't forget it because it was a whole turnaround in my life. When I went home to Stamford, he then took me to lunch and asked me in person. Oh, that brings up a point. How long was *The Spirit* supplement running before the dailies came in?

EISNER: Only about a year.

FOX: So the dailies didn't happen immediately?

EISNER: No. They talked about it. I wasn't ready to do dailies because I had never done a big time daily before. To this day I don't think I'd enjoy doing a daily. To me it's like trying to conduct an orchestra in a telephone booth. I can't seem to get any satisfaction out of a daily strip. The Register & Tribune wanted a daily strip almost immediately because they thought that would be a natural tie-in. I think I only did a little over a year of dailies before I went into the service. The dailies weren't doing all that well because I was trying all these weird ideas like a whole daily strip with nothing but footprints in the snow and so forth. After that, Lou Fine and Jack Cole took it over.

THE SPIRIT'S FEDORA—Although Lou Fine had tremendous drawing ability, he had trouble with hats. (1942)

FOX: You had one sequence that I don't think anybody could forget. The people that were shipwrecked. Were they on a raft? That was incredible.

EISNER: Apparently it didn't impress or satisfy the daily strip reader. It was moving either too fast or too slow or whatever. I was always experimenting.

FOX: Before its time.

EISNER: Could have been. On the other hand, it may have been thirty years *after* its time. [chortle] So that was where the daily strip fell. Then when I went into the Army, Lou and Jack Cole took over. The agreement was that when I went into the service Busy Arnold would take over as managing partner.

FOX: There was one thing about Lou, getting on the technical side now, that I had always noticed as editor. I never mentioned it to him but other good artists had noticed it. Lou, for some reason, with all this magnificent genius, couldn't put a fedora on a head correctly, which was necessary to draw The Spirit. [laughter] Am I hitting a spot?

EISNER: Right! And I'll tell you something else. When I would say to Lou, "Let's make this guy standing in a funny pose," say Ebony, for example, the result was weird. Lou's idea of funny was to put a big ass on the character, with him kind of bent over. Look back over his *Spirit* stuff and you'll see what I mean. He thought this was funnier than hell. But you're right. He never got the hat quite right.

FOX: It wouldn't set over the ears correctly and he was *so* good that I could never understand that. [chuckle] To get this correct in the time frame, the social side of the relationship and friendship got warmer and warmer. We moved and after the war, when I went into the service, I lost contact with Lou. Then I came out and found myself on Long Island. I bought a house. Through the grapevine I found out that Lou was living on the other side of the island and we resumed contact socially. I visited there. He had a very pleasant house close to Long Beach and close to the Queens Line. At that time I was really working in many styles and phases of cartooning. I was working at Johnstone & Cushing. If you teach cartooning —I've taught cartooning at Fairfield University and I had to do some research—you break it down and find there are nine phases to cartooning. I've practiced all of them.

EISNER: What are the nine phases?

FOX: They are: 1. syndication; 2. comic books; 3. political; 4. magazine gag; 5. advertising; 6. illustration; 7. animation; 8. caricature; 9. sport, which is almost extinct.

EISNER: Oh, I see. When I heard you say "phases" I thought you meant something else. Let me back you up a bit because very little has been said about Johnstone & Cushing as a shop, and yet it has had a tremendous effect on the commercial application of comics.

FOX: Very much like yourself.

EISNER: They were a very important factor in the development of this field. Johnstone & Cushing is kind of lost in the history. Very few people know about it. There are a few of the old timers around or the "middle" old timers around who worked there, like Neal Adams and Jack Davis. Johnstone & Cushing was an outgrowth of the advertising field in which they employed comic strip artists for commercial purposes. They did "Mr. Coffee Nerves," for example, which Jack Davis worked on and...

FOX: Al Dorne created the "Coffee Nerves" series originally. Johnstone & Cushing took it over later.

EISNER: Obviously, they were hiring artists who were very strong illustrators because their clients demanded excellence in drawing, except for the out-and-out joke things. So, Lou left Arnold to go there. When did Lou leave?

FOX: I'm trying to remember. Johnstone and Cushing goes right back to at least '46 when I came out of the service. I had heard about it...

EISNER: But Lou was already there.

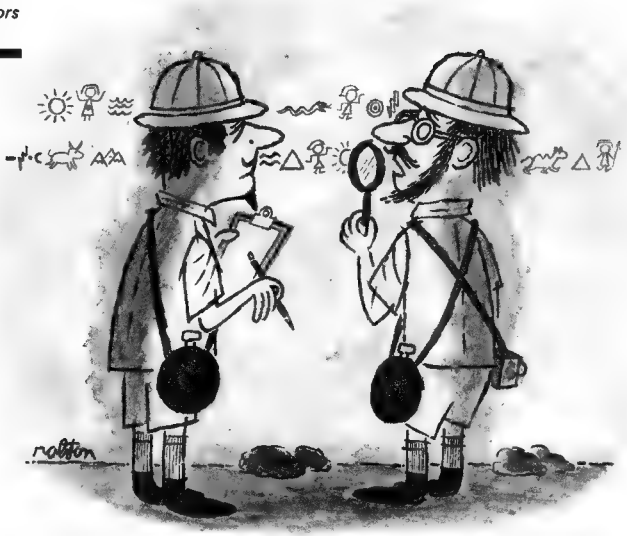
FOX: Lou was there in '46. Lou probably broke into Johnstone and Cushing in '45. I started contributing in '46 and did not get on the staff until '48. But Lou was there a few months ahead of me. As a young cartoonist I had two ambitions. One was syndication —it's an obsession to this day— and the other was to work for Johnstone and Cushing. Actually, syndication was a better one. I didn't realize it at the time. So I tried for fifteen years to break into Johnstone and Cushing and finally did. They were thirty-five years old when they folded. I was there for the folding. I was with them in the studio for five years and I worked as a contributor for ten years, so I was there for a total of fifteen. Lou was ahead of me. That didn't

© 1984 DC Comics.

UNCLE SAM—With World War II on the horizon, Eisner borrowed the editorial cartoon symbol of America and made him into a superhero with his own magazine. Lou Fine collaborated closely with Eisner on this series and these panels display the Japanese brush techniques shared in the studio. (Alden McWilliams collection)

surprise me, with his talent. He was already doing some of the top syndicated ads. They were syndicated in roughly ninety papers. Metro Service would be distributing them around the country for some of the big advertisers, the detergent makers and so forth. And Lou did "Mr. Coffee Nerves" from time to time. You never knew what you were going to do. I'm going to make a point here. All the fellows that worked up there knew this. Johnstone and Cushing's fees were 50/50, unlike most agents, whose fees were 25% at that time. Actually, they were an art service. Jack Cushing was the son of the inventor of the tracer bullet. He lived up here in Connecticut. The old man who was the partner had a delightful face. He looked like Santa Claus without the beard. He was old Tim Johnstone. Johnstone's brother was a cartoonist. Remember the *Collier's* political cartoons by Will Johnstone? That was his brother. He came as a newspaper man from the "old world." I don't know where his money came from but he was in show business. He wrote musicals and he had a piano in the office and there'd be showgirls going in and out. It was a great place to work. [laughter] Anyway, those were the two people who formed Johnstone and Cushing. Lou easily, with his ability, got into this thing. Now, one of the problems is that they're supposed to pay 50%. Lou's strip ads, I know,

ADVERTISMENT—A Johnstone and Cushing plug that ran in the 1956 *Art Directors Club Annual.*



"It says that Johnstone and Cushing has specialized in comic strip advertising for 25 years!"

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were getting $1,500. The average artist would roughly get between $250 and —if you were in the big time with them—$400.

EISNER: That's for a page?

FOX: That's for a half page Sunday spread.

EISNER: Do you realize how much that was at that time? Whew!

FOX: That's the point. It was enough for us, even though we didn't get the full 50%.

EISNER: That's enormous.

FOX: Well, their argument —if you claimed you weren't getting the entire 50%— was that you were using their studio space five days a week and getting all your supplies. They had an argument and they also had a tremendous overhead on photostats. They showed us the bills on that and they were incredible. They had a couple of people on salary. Well, Lou worked there. He got this. But then a shrewd young guy who was a cartoonist sought Lou's ability. I don't know where Lou met him. We'll call him "Arnie." He evidently propositioned Lou to be a partner. They opened their own studio and the fellow would ink over Lou's stuff and he was a hell of a salesman. I found out later how he operated. In fact, I test-ran it myself and it's very practical. There were two outfits selling newspaper ad space. His was the biggest. We'll call it "Number One." Well, it was a matter of you paying off 10%. Some of these accounts were big, $2000 or so.

EISNER: These were commercial accounts; commercial advertisers working out of agencies?

FOX: That's right. Now he'd walk around with Lou's beautiful samples. First someone at Number One would tip him off as to what agency was anticipating doing a national ad and were looking at portfolios. He had no way of knowing this unless his Number One contact told him. He would walk in, show Lou's stuff, and that ended the competition. They loved Lou's art. And for that he'd pay 10% to his tipster. I tested it at another outfit that also sold newspaper ad space and the salesman told me that it was no problem at all. I asked him if it could be done and he said, "Of course. It's a business."

EISNER: Well, it's a "finder's fee," you might say.

FOX: But when you walked in with Lou's stuff, the competition ended. And, anyway, this guy was inking over Lou's stuff. I was playing badminton over on Long Island, in Garden City, and there was a writer, a radio writer, very successful. He invited me over to the house for a drink and in the course of the conversation he mentioned that he knew Arnie and called him "a very wealthy man." He said, "Two Cadillacs, this beautiful house and he's in the advertising business — comic strips." And I said, "Yeah, I know Arnie's a partner of a friend of mine." In the course of the conversation he added, "I know how much he makes. Something well over $100,000 a year." So I went back to Lou and I said, "Lou, what did you make last year?" He said, "I made $20,000." I said, "Wasn't your partnership 50/50? When did you look at the books last?" And he said, "I'm not going to look at the books. I'm happy with $20,000." [laughter] I never told Lou's wife Mary, 'cause Mary would go out of her head!

EISNER: Mary was tough, I remember.

FOX: Right. Lou was soft.

EISNER: Mary had a conversation with me once about paying Lou on time. I paid! [laughter]

FOX: $20,000 was enough and he let it go at that and this is the God's honest truth!

EISNER: He didn't want to have a confrontation.

FOX: I knew Arnie and Lou were good because at that point I heard complaints at Johnstone and Cushing that they were starting to take accounts away from Johnstone and Cushing all by themselves. And I'm talking about Stan Drake, Dik Browne and so on. Well, Lou would be competing with Stan and Ken Bald, some of the top "straight" illustrators and he would knock them over.

EISNER: Well, Lou Fine, by then, had changed his style completely. That's the one thing that struck me. He was very unhappy with comics or comic books. I'm

really trying to find out what made Lou leave Busy Arnold. You were not privy to that?

FOX: What made Lou leave? No, I never asked that. I can only assume something. I know we had a lot in common, and I think Lou's ambitions went in the same direction mine did. He wanted to go on to a higher plane than the comic books. If he could have made a living outside he would have left them immediately. First of all, nobody ever probed. He was quiet. Lou was an extremely intelligent man. He was capable of writing his own stuff.

EISNER: That's right. He was a very thoughtful but private person.

FOX: Fans have asked me about his writing and I said to them that it wasn't possible for him to write. He was in too much demand for his art. I proved it at one point. I was doing illustrations for the Hearst supplement and I happened to be in the office of the art director of the supplement. Now this is a big publication using top illustration talent, paying top price. I don't care how big they are, when they got down to black and white without models or photographs, they couldn't touch Lou. I noticed when I went into the art director's office that he was using a lot of black and white art from this top talent. I said, "Could you use a good black and white illustrator?" He said, "I certainly could!" I sent Lou in and for the next twelve weeks he did eleven jobs. I kept count of them. His texture was superb in black and white. He was beginning to shift away from the comic book techniques at this point. He was opening up into the illustration. This is after the war. I have an illustration he did for *Collier's* or *Saturday Evening Post.*

EISNER: Fantastic. Remarkable how his style changed and how adaptable it was. He became very adept at what was recognized as a standard of realistic illustration. This was when you were doing work for Johnstone and Cushing?

FOX: Roughly at about the same time.

EISNER: What kind of work were you doing at Johnstone and Cushing?

FOX: I did not do straight illustration.

EISNER: You were a cartoonist essentially. By "straight" you mean realistic?

FOX: I did one thing. I would go as far as light illustration. Craig Flessel, one of Johnstone and Cushing's staff, went away on a vacation one time in the middle of a Campbell's Beans strip series. It was a pretty popular strip and quite complex, although it wasn't heavy illustration. It was light, humorous illustration, not cartooning. For some reason they had me spotted and they asked me to ghost it. I took it on and rendered it. It was the beginning of me going into light illustration. After that I did a lot of advertising for clip services and so forth, using a light illustrative style.

EISNER: I remember that your work was always light, clean-lined and tight.

FOX: Usually tight. It loosened later on, particularly when I did *Side Glances.*

EISNER: Did it? Well, as you matured it probably did.

FOX: Well, it became necessary...

EISNER: I attribute that to maturity. Look at Michaelangelo's late work, at those unfinished sculpures. There's a looseness. It comes first of all out of maturity.

FOX: Personality has so much to do with it.

EISNER: Maturity. Artists are growing constantly, like flowers. [chuckle]

FOX: Constantly. It never ends.

EISNER: I'm a cactus. [laughter] Lou did what a lot of artists did when they moved out into commercial or advertising art. They altered their styles to suit the accepted standards. The important thing here is that they were "tightening" up their work. They were conforming. The oddity of this is that they really thought they were improving. In the process they left behind the experimentation that made them individuals. From being unique Lou changed, in my opinion, in the other direction. His later stuff became very tight as I recall. Am I wrong about this?

FOX: No, you're correct in the sense that it...

EISNER: In the sense that it became rigid and controlled. Sure, his work was now slick and commercial, but gone was Lou Fine! His work looked like all the others.

FOX: I'll tell you, it was necessary for the period. That's what they were doing in advertising and that's what Lou followed up.

EISNER: Of course! But other artists' styles survived that transition —Jack Davis, for example. The point to think about is that perhaps he didn't think his style —his artistic identity— was worth trying to preserve in the face of economic opportunity. On the other hand, perhaps he *really* felt that his sweeping, fluid style was somehow inferior and that what he was now doing was a step *up* artistically. Look, unlike Alex Kotzky, whose work in comic books was not much different than the commercial strips he did later, Lou Fine had a unique —a very unusual style of rendering. Please understand, I'm *only* talking about creative growth. Alex Kotzky was, by the way, a very good friend of Lou back in my shop. Perhaps there was a kind of influence there.

FOX: I'm sorry I didn't mention Al, who is also a very close friend of mine and a part of this group too.

EISNER: Alex was?

FOX: Alex Kotzky, yes. He moved up to Stamford and we felt sorry for him be-

SLICK STYLE—A Lou Fine magazine illustration done in the late '40s.

cause he was alone. Actually, he was an orphan, raised by an aunt.

EISNER: He was always a loner? Is that what you mean?

FOX: We used to invite him to the house. He became part of the group. He sat at Lou's feet, watching.

EISNER: He was a great admirer of Lou's. When he came into my shop at Tudor City he was hired to ink on backgrounds.

FOX: I didn't know that. The first feature where I saw his work was in *Manhunter.* That's the first one he did for Quality.

EISNER: I remember. I created *Manhunter* for one of the comic books and Dick French wrote the first few. Who does *Apartment 3-G* now? Isn't that still a Kotzky strip?

FOX: *Apartment 3-G* was, and continues to be, a highly successful syndicated strip.

EISNER: Yeah. Now Lou did a strip, *Thatch...?*

FOX: No. *Peter Scratch.* And there was another one.

EISNER: *Peter Scratch!* That was done in what I call a commercial or highly realistic style. It was nothing like Lou's earlier comic book work.

FOX: Very tight. I have one in my collection.

EISNER: Well, that makes my point. So Lou moved from this loose, very artistic free-moving style he worked on when he was with me to this controlled, disciplined style of art.

FOX: Roughly about the time we are talking about now, Mary had quite a stroke. Mary always had a heart condition. She took care of herself and the life at that point in Stamford was the most idyllic for them, as it was for my own life. I had just gotten married. I knew these other artists. I was completely saturated, and I loved the cartooning. That's all we talked about when this group would get together. That was one of the best parts of my life. It was so pleasant. No money, but it was pleasant! Anyway, we knew about her heart condition, so we were not too surprised when it happened. She passed away. Lou lived for her. Now at the point where I got over to the Hearst supplement, I was at lunch with Lou and I noticed that he was sad and lonely. Lou wanted to be married. He was missing Mary. During lunch he mentioned a girl he had met. I was surprised and I didn't say much. By George, within six months he had married this girl —unfortunately, in one sense. She had two children and Lou had two children. They moved in together. Then sometime later Lou and I got together and he mentioned that it was rough. The two sets of kids were just not getting along. Financially, Lou was making it at that point. He had one house, then he bought a second house. Lou

BLACK & WHITE—Four examples of the type of illustration work Lou Fine did for the American Bankers Association during the 1950s.

lived with his kids in this big house on Lido Beach and *she* lived in another house with *her* children.

EISNER: Incredible.

FOX: They'd come up here and we'd meet and socialize. There was nothing wrong with their own compatibility. They just could not live in the same place together with the children.

EISNER: How did it affect his work?

FOX: Lou never allowed himself to become distracted. He always worked methodically. He was picking up assignments I didn't even know about. Anytime I'd find work, I'd send it on to him.

EISNER: Do you recall conversations with him —professional conversations? What was he really striving for? Was he just interested in taking on work and making money or...?

FOX: Even though he didn't answer that, I can tell you. Towards the end, when I would go over to the house he lived in on Long Island with Mary, he took me up to the studio. He had a long studio that he had built. If Mary had lived, he'd be there yet. It had windows running the length of a 25 foot room that overlooked the canal behind the house. If you were a boat person, it was a great place. You could have parked your boat right on your property. He went into a cabinet and he pulled out a sample he was working on. I was shocked. It was a black and white illustration. It was loaded with texture; an old man sitting on a log. He was testing himself. He was headed toward illustration. It was the end of the magazines' Golden Period. It was just before *Collier's* folded. That's probably what he had in mind. In fairness to Lou, I believe he might have found himself, artistically, as an individual in magazine illustration.

EISNER: Well, I'm glad to hear that! Lou, as far as I knew him, really didn't care about comics the way I care. I guess he saw himself as an illustrator. The only time there was any friction between us was because of that point. I'd pause by his drawing board —I'd walk from board to board, like an old German schoolmaster, making comments, suggestions and offering ideas...

FOX: Ha! I remember that.

EISNER: Oh, you remember, eh? [chuckle] A very annoying trait. Probably bugged them when I asked them to change a panel or reorder a sequence. Actually, since they were all on salary, they must have figured that since I was paying for the time, why not? Besides, the deadline was my worry anyhow.

FOX: That fascinated me, how you could do it all.

EISNER: Well, I'd look over Lou's shoulder and say, "You know, that panel doesn't work with the storytelling." Lou would be sitting there doing this magnifi-

"THE NAME IS SCRATCH! I'M A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR, PETER SCRATCH. FUNNY NAME, SCRATCH? I GUESS SO. CHARACTERS WHO'LL DO ANYTHING FOR A LAUGH CALL ME 'PETE THE ITCH.' THEY DO IT ONCE—NEVER AGAIN. YOU'VE GOT TO REMEMBER, SCRATCH ALSO MEANS DOUGH, OR THE DEVIL. REMEMBER THAT.
9-13
© 1965, Newsday, Inc.
I JUST FINISHED A CASE. A REAL DIRTY ONE—DIVORCE STUFF. I TOOK IT BECAUSE I NEEDED THE DOUGH. BUT I'VE GOT A DELICATE STOMACH. AND WHEN MY CLIENT, A LOUSE NAMED HARVEY YOUNGER, IMPLIED I WAS LESS THAN EFFICIENT AT MY LIFE'S CALLING...
"I RESIGNED!"
"I HAD JUST SEEN MY LATEST CLIENT TO THE STAIRS—WHEN HE RUNS INTO THIS QUEER LOOKING LITTLE CREEP COMING UP.
© 1965, Newsday, Inc.
I'M SORRY, MISTER, BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE USED THE ELEVATOR.
ELEVATOR? I SAW NO ELEVATOR.
9-14
NO ELEVATOR, HUH? NEVER CHECKED UP ON IT MYSELF! WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
YOU CONFUSE ME, MR. SCRATCH. FRANKLY, WITH THE TROUBLE I AM NOW IN, I DO NOT KNOW IF YOU CAN HELP ME OR HINDER ME.
"HE HAD A POINT THERE."

©1965 Newsday, Inc. (with a tip of the hat to The Menomonee Falls Gazette)

FIRST DAILIES—In 1965 Lou Fine teamed up with Elliot Caplin to create *Peter Scratch*. A second strip, *Adam Ames*, came later.

cent piece of art, with beautiful figures. He's modelling the muscles and I'm saying, "But this guy isn't hurt. He doesn't look like he's shot." I didn't realize it at the time, but I realize it now, that my point didn't mean a thing to Lou. He was much more concerned with this beautiful rendering that he was doing. The submission of that character to a story for him was a grating, grinding thing.

FOX: That's a good point. Kotzky, in contrast, learned what you taught him. Kotzky is admired today as a storyteller.

EISNER: That's all I was ever really interested in. I never had aspirations to be a great illustrator. Early on, as a kid, perhaps, but...

FOX: But that isn't really necessary in strip art, to be a great illustrator.

EISNER: No, I believe, and always have, that this is a kind of literary form. The artwork is only one element of the whole. For me the form is a *means*, not an *end*.

FOX: If that could be impressed on students...

EISNER: Well, it is a very hard thing to sell to young students because the art and its rendering is the first thing to get noticed. Too often, it stops right there. A great number of modern comic books are admired *only* for their art content. So, who can really blame a student for being influenced by those reactions? Sadly, it's like having your play admired only for the stage set. When evaluating a comic it is unfair to separate the art from the story. That's why anyone who tries to consider this medium intellectually or critically often struggles for an encompassing definition. Now, perhaps, here is another clue to what was bothering Lou. He worshipped rendering. It was more important to him to create elegant bodies in flowing action and with brilliant anatomical construction in virtuoso line. I hope I'm not belaboring the point. Do you agree?

FOX: I agree with that 100%. I've heard this comment made by other people about Lou's storytelling. Even to this day Kotzky is tremendously admired and they can't kill that strip, even in the face of the tremendous erosion of straight newspaper continuity strips, because of the storytelling. I agree with you. You're right. And it's a shame. There's Lou, right at the tail end of illustration and he couldn't get into it.

EISNER: He was perhaps behind his time. Fifteen years earlier he could have been one of the great illustrators, along with Rahleigh, Cornwall and the rest.

FOX: I got Lou an account with the American Banker's Institute. The art director, Don Cronin, began associating with Lou because of his great personality. I remember one night we were at an American Legion Hall and Don was in the show. Lou and I and his new wife were in the audience. Lou was totally fascinated because this little Irishman, Don, who was a bachelor, loved to sing "Coney Island Baby." [chuckle] He's in the show and he comes out singing and Lou's watching the show, making a lot of funny comments. [chuckle]

EISNER: Very good. Well, when Lou started to become more advertising oriented, was he more articulate or verbal? Or was he always pretty quiet?

FOX: No, as I got to know him. I could hold a great conversation with him. We would interrelate with the family problems and so forth. He told me the whole thing as it progressed —the sad situation with the children. I went to the... what is the Jewish term for funeral?

EISNER: Well, you sit "shiva" for seven days after someone dies. Like a long wake!

FOX: I went to it with his family. But the one thing I want to get on record is the one thing that surprised me. It shouldn't have. It was the business of his paintings. He mentioned to me that he had been fooling around with oils. Lou couldn't brag in any way. In fact, I mentioned to him a few years before he died, "This comic book fan thing is growing and you're becoming a legend." And he said to me, "So I'm famous. Why aren't I wealthy?" He said he was painting and I said, "Gee, I would love to see them sometime." One day he brought me into the house. This I believe was the old house after Mary died, before he sold it and moved. He had paintings all around. There were ten or fifteen paintings. They were all landscapes, but there was some-

thing in those landscapes. He was so much better than anything I see by the professional painters at shows up here. Even in his first paintings. He would do a thing—if you look at it quickly you will think you're looking at an abstract. He was using the shapes and the spaces beautifully. Lou in the literal sense had instinct. His paintings were great, the color and everything else. They are somewhere. I would love to see them again. I assume they're owned by his second wife..

EISNER: You should try to find them.

FOX: We're talking about what Lou wanted to be. Lou had a library of books on the art of watercolor. Years ago he was reading. I have a book in my library that belonged to Lou that I never returned to him, another watercolor book. It includes the work of Andrew Wyeth when he was 22 years old. That's how old the book is. Lou was reading it. Years ago we didn't know it but he evidently intended to go into literal art in some sense, either illustration or fine art.

EISNER: Did he talk about comics at all?

FOX: Oh, naturally. He was fascinated by Jack Cole. He admired Jack Cole tremendously.

EISNER: Do you remember any artists who influenced Lou?

FOX: Lou never said. But I know who it was because I studied Lou's stuff so closely. Al Dorne was one of them. Another one was [J.C.] Leyendecker.

EISNER: Well that's interesting because Leyendecker influenced me tremendously too.

FOX: Is it possible that you put Lou on to him because he was a kid when you first met him?

EISNER: Maybe, because I remember there was a book I loaned to Lou. It was a book on pen and ink drawings edited by A. L. Guptill. Lou studied the work of [John R.] Neill.

FOX: Of course.

EISNER: Guptill was an early master of pen and ink himself. There was also a book kicking around the studio by Joseph Pennell, another pen and ink master.

FOX: I didn't know Guptill drew too. Now that you mention it, of course. I remember seeing his work, but I never tied the two together.

EISNER: These books were in the studio all the time.

FOX: Well, the one that's the most important influence goes back to the days when Lou first came down with polio and couldn't get out and play ball or anything when he was 12 or 15 years old. It was Heinrich Kley.

LEYENDECKER BRUSHSTROKES—Best known for his Arrow shirt collar ads and *Saturday Evening Post* covers, J. C. Leyendecker's work influenced Eisner as well as Lou Fine. (Alex Chasky collection)

EISNER: Heinrich Kley, yeah. The early 20s and 30s were golden years for pen and ink illustrators. I was curious. It's fairly easy to sit and analyze Lou's work now and try to find out where he came from. In practice, we all influenced each other. This is inescapable, working side-by-side in a studio.

FOX: I picked up a lot from you myself, even the bigfoot stuff. Your inking technique...

EISNER: Mine was a kind of hybrid. I was always midway between "straight" and "humor." What I'm trying to find out is whether Lou consciously or particularly followed someone's work.

FOX: I happen to own one of his best examples. Busy Arnold tore it in half and threw it away. So I only got the bottom half. It's one of the best examples of that particular Japanese brush technique and you can see the Leyendecker influences in it: trap shadows and then combined lines.

EISNER: This comes from the old steel engravings. That's an example of his fascination with technique. I would not have the patience, even at that point, to do that. Anyway, let's get back to the historical. So he's living out on the Island and now he's doing a lot of commercial work. What happened to this partnership with this hot-shot promoter?

FOX: How that dissolved I couldn't say. I do know that, again, Mary was angry. She sensed that Lou was being taken and he *was*, according to what I had learned. It lasted about two years and they made money, although Lou himself didn't realize that much out of it. I have a hunch that it dissolved quietly because Mary might have said something to Lou.

EISNER: If I know Lou, his style would be to say to this fellow, "I am not coming to work anymore." Or perhaps not even that. He would just smile sadly and quit; not show up. Let's talk about the Elliot Caplin business now —Lou's relationship with him, I mean.

FOX: This is a later period, while Lou was doing general freelance work. I had been working with Elliot. He was the brother of Al Capp and handled the merchandising side of *Li'l Abner.* Along with the merchandising he found other accounts. Incidentally, Mel Lazarus was a part of that studio. Mel was the director, and a hell of a nice guy.

EISNER: Mel's now doing *Momma* [and *Miss Peach.*]

FOX: *Momma* is my favorite comic strip. That is what I call the perfect comic strip, but nobody else could do it. Mel is a hell of a writer. Anyway, I was working with Elliot on ad accounts while I worked with Johnstone and Cushing because of the 50/50 split. He opened his own place. I did some lettering for him. We were good friends. Elliot said to me, "I got a strip. Do you know any straight artist?" I knew Elliot was looking for talent and had had one unsuccessful attempt with a syndicate strip. I called Elliot up and said, "Look, I have a talent, Stan Drake, that you won't believe." Elliot didn't know commercial artwork, but he said, "Send him over." So Elliot looks at the stuff and evidently says, "Do you want a job with Al?" And Stan says, "What in the hell do I want a job with Al Capp for? I'm here to show you my own work. I'm not interested in working as an assistant to Al." Elliot showed Stan's work to Al and Al said, "Don't let him get away!" The result was that Elliot wrote a strip for Stan. He was a hell of a straight soap opera writer and —wham!— this thing hits without a bat of an eyelash. They had a big one when it was launched. It's eroded now, but they had a great strip when they started.

EISNER: What was it? *The Heart of Juliet Jones?*

FOX: Yes, *The Heart of Juliet Jones.* Because of that, Elliot would listen to me immediately when I had a "straight" artist to put to work. In the ensuing years, I must have mentioned Lou's ability to Elliot a half-dozen times. Finally my praise bore fruit. It resulted in two strips. The first one was *Peter Scratch,* which was about a private detective...

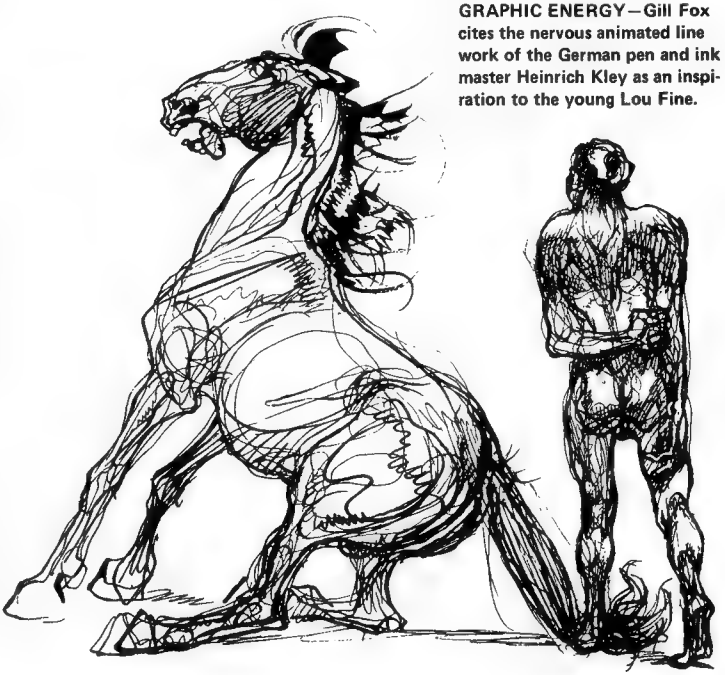
EISNER: Elliot wrote that?

FOX: Elliot wrote *Peter Scratch.* There was a subsequent one after *Peter Scratch* folded called *Adam Ames. Adam Ames* was another strip about a fine artist. Both of them were soap operas. Despite the writing and Lou's great drawing talent, the strips didn't do that well. Probably six months to a year before Lou died, he had been contacted by Stan Drake. Stan was writing a new strip idea. I don't know what the subject matter was, but Lou was doing the artwork. Naturally, when you're speculating on strip presentations and trying to make a living, the presentations are always going to go slowly. The writer always gets annoyed because he's waiting for material that never comes through. Eventually you'll get it finished. A presentation takes anywhere from a week of finishes to two weeks. Some people will do six months of strips. They're crazy.

EISNER: I think they generally ask for eighteen days of samples.

FOX: Well, if you're doing "straight" stuff, and you're doing a continuing story, then it's necessary to show more visual material. It could be done with a script if they knew the artist. Lou had done quite a bit of work on Stan's strip at the time of his death. Poor Lou was found, according to the way I understood it, on the threshold of the studio, between the studio and the hallway out of the studio. Lou was living by himself. Evidently nobody knew he had a heart condition. I didn't. Elliot Fine, his son, didn't know it. His wife didn't know it. But in the medicine chest they found prescribed drugs that showed he had a heart condition.

EISNER: Now this was on the verge of a third strip?



GRAPHIC ENERGY—Gill Fox cites the nervous animated line work of the German pen and ink master Heinrich Kley as an inspiration to the young Lou Fine.

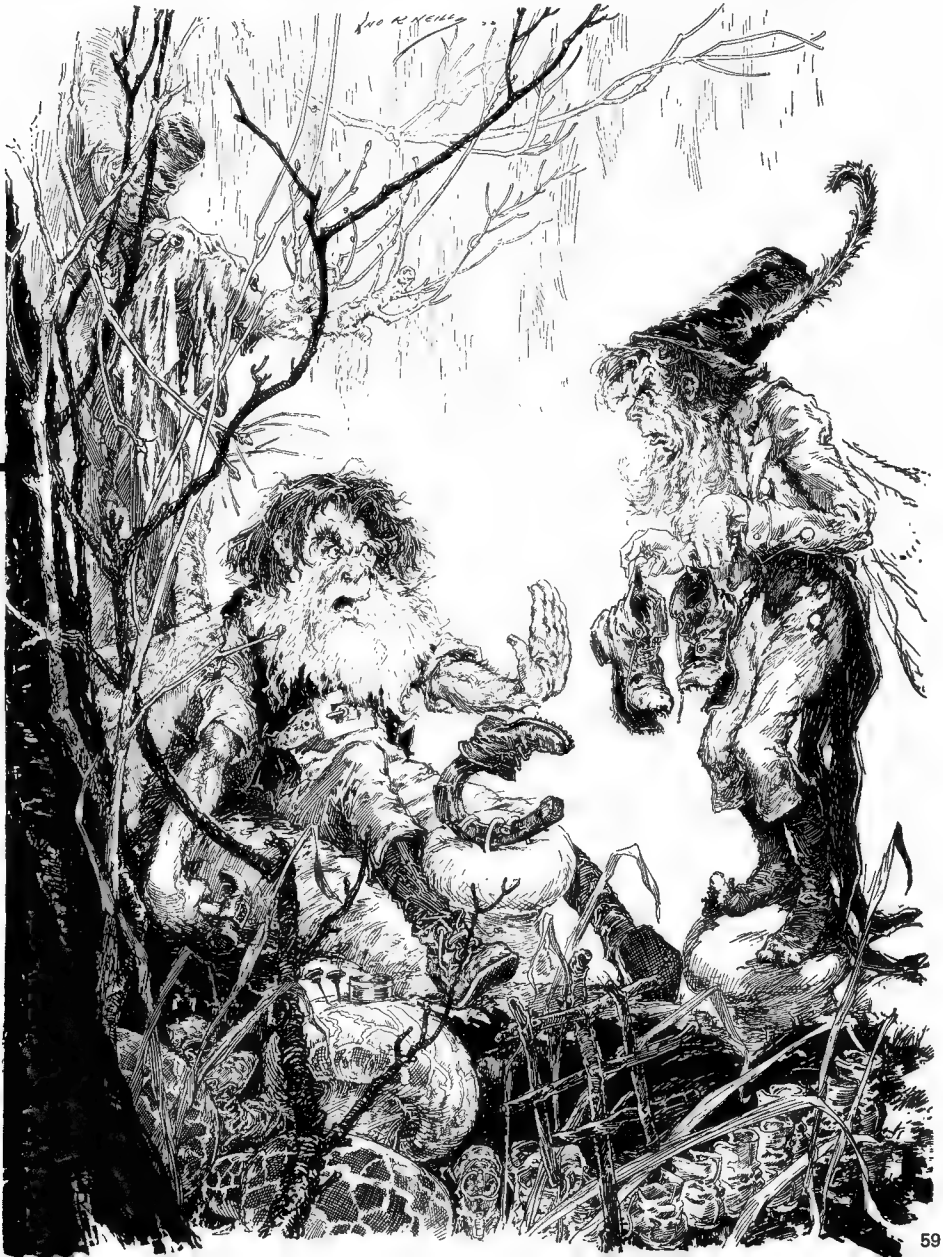
FOX: He was already doing it. He had completed the presentation. He had done *Peter Scratch* first, *Adam Ames* second, and they had folded.

EISNER: So, left unfinished at Lou Fine's death was a new strip that he was developing with Stan Drake.

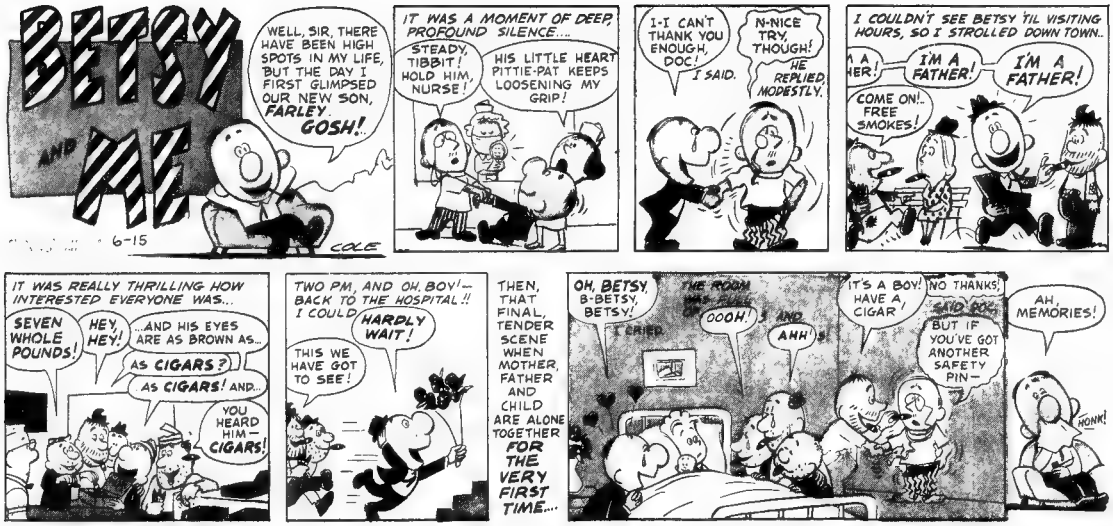
FOX: And it was a fascinating combination because here you had two of the best damn "straight" men working as a team. Drake is a good writer. People don't know that because the situation is similar to Lou. There is such a demand for his graphics that he doesn't have time to write. Anyway, I know Stan well enough and I was surprised when he told me about the new strip. I was watching for the results.

EISNER: What was Lou thinking at the time? Was this a tremendous opportunity for him? The reason I ask this is there is a story that Jack Cole wanted his own daily strip all his life. Finally, he got one started after *Playboy*...

FOX: No, you have your precedents wrong there. He had that strip, *Betsy and Me*, slightly before his *Playboy* thing



RENDERING TECHNIQUES— Eisner remembers Lou Fine paying particular attention to this illustration by John R. Neill called "The Cobbler" for the variety of line and tone used to create texture. It was an example in a book on drawing that was discussed in the shop.


BETSY AND ME
WELL, SIR, THERE HAVE BEEN HIGH SPOTS IN MY LIFE, BUT THE DAY I FIRST GLIMPSED OUR NEW SON, FARLEY... GOSH!
6-15
COLE
IT WAS A MOMENT OF DEEP, PROFOUND SILENCE...
STEADY, TIBBIT! HOLD HIM, NURSE!
HIS LITTLE HEART PITTIE-PAT KEEPS LOOSENING MY GRIP!
I-I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH, DOC!
I SAID.
N-NICE TRY, THOUGH!
HE REPLIED, MODESTLY.
I COULDN'T SEE BETSY 'TIL VISITING HOURS, SO I STROLLED DOWN TOWN..
I'M A FATHER!
I'M A FATHER!
COME ON!.. FREE SMOKES!
IT WAS REALLY THRILLING HOW INTERESTED EVERYONE WAS...
SEVEN WHOLE POUNDS!
HEY, HEY!
..AND HIS EYES ARE AS BROWN AS...
AS CIGARS?
AS CIGARS! AND..
YOU HEARD HIM— CIGARS!
TWO PM, AND OH, BOY!— BACK TO THE HOSPITAL!! I COULD
HARDLY WAIT!
THIS WE HAVE GOT TO SEE!
THEN, THAT FINAL, TENDER SCENE WHEN MOTHER, FATHER AND CHILD ARE ALONE TOGETHER FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME...
OH, BETSY, B-BETSY, BETSY!
I CRIED
THE ROOM WAS FILLED WITH
OOOH!
AND
AHH!
IT'S A BOY! HAVE A CIGAR
NO THANKS! SAID BOB
BUT IF YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER SAFETY PIN—
AH, MEMORIES!
HONK!

PLASTIC MAN'S CREATOR—Jack Cole's late work for the syndicate was a departure from his adventure material in style and content. (1958)

came together. And *Betsy and Me* was a slow builder.

EISNER: Somebody told me that Cole had just started the daily and then he commited suicide.

FOX: The strip was roughly one or two years old. There were *avante garde* editors, comic editors, guys like McMeel at Universal Syndicate. They were very astute young people watching the field and looking into the future. They were telling me, "This guy Cole, this friend of yours, he's doing clever stuff. This could be a big one!" It was a very unusual comic strip. On top of that, anywhere from six months to a year after the strip was running, Jack hits with [Hugh] Hefner and becomes the Peter Arno of *Playboy*.

EISNER: Jack came to visit me in New York to recruit me because Hefner was a *Spirit* fan. He offered me a chance to work for *Playboy*. I think you were with him at the time, if my memory serves me.

FOX: You took us to the Advertising Club. We all went out for dinner.

EISNER: That's right. But I couldn't do anything about it because I was running a company at the time, a publishing company. I remember Jack saying, "It's just as well you can't because we don't need any competition!"

FOX: [laughter]

EISNER: It was his kind of humor, you know. But to get back to Lou —at what point in his professional career was he? Was he in limbo? Was he doing well or badly? Do you have any memories of that?

FOX: I would say Lou had to be doing well financially. He was in what would have to be considered an affluent area, in Lido Beach, with a three or four bedroom house.

EISNER: And he still had two homes then?

FOX: And he had two houses. One for his wife and one for himself. He lived alone and I couldn't believe the size of the goddamn thing. So it was my impression Lou was making money. I don't think he ever hit $100,000 a year.

EISNER: The point is he was making a lot of money, but was he professionally happy?

FOX: There was no direction, if you're asking me.

EISNER: That's a very important observation.

FOX: I say that because you made me put it into words. There was no direction, really, for Lou, because the goddamn illustration field was gone.

EISNER: The illustration field and the opportunities were no longer easy to find. The big users like *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, the pulps, were gone. Photography was now dominating the illustration field as we knew it.

FOX: Right. He could pick up a black and white illustration job easily because he could top anyone else. At that time if you made $150 for an illustration you were in the big time, and Lou probably got top rate. Today the rates are way up. Lou would make a fortune. You wouldn't believe the change. I pick it up now. It was quite logical when Stan approached him for a strip and the straight story strips were still doing well. With Stan's background and influence with the syndicates and the respect that he had, it was a good deal. I would have taken it myself if I was Lou. When Lou died there were at least two weeks of unfinished strips. Stan Drake bought them from Lou's son, Elliot Fine. I spoke to Stan about them but, unfortunately, the art has been lost.

EISNER: I never saw Lou after the War. I never saw him, never spoke to him. He never called me. I had no occasion to call him and as I told you earlier, our lives went in different directions. I was in another field. Nobody I know who knew him afterward ever heard him refer to his Eisner-Iger days. When did Lou die; the actual date?

FOX: July 24, 1971. He passed away before my folks. I can't believe it.

EISNER: It's twelve years ago already.

FOX: Yes. I'm reading here from the *Comic Buyer's Guide*..It says, "Golden age artist Lou Fine died of a heart attack at age 57. Associated with Will Eisner's studio for many years. Worked on *The Spirit* for a long period. He also did work for Fox and later for the line of Quality Comics. He's best known for his elaborate detailed covers."

EISNER: I think we should close on that.

Self-portrait.

Gill Fox

lives and draws in Connecticut with his wife Helen, and daughters Susan and Donna. During a career that has spanned over fifty years, he has worked in every phase of cartooning from animation to advertising, in comic books to syndicated features as well as other forms of the medium. Below are examples of his work to supplement the preceding dialogue.

Pre-war *Dollman* cover.

Editorial cartoon.

"I DON'T BELIEVE IT. THE WOMAN HE'S LIVING WITH IS AS OLD AS HIS EX-WIFE!"

Syndicated panel.

even more in '84

from aardvark-vanaheim

even more in '84

monthly

CEREBUS

JOURNEY

bimonthly

NEIL the HORSE

NORMALMAN

twice yearly

SWORDS of CEREBUS

Aardvark Vanaheim

LETTERS

PROSE DOESN'T MATCH ART

I was most favorably impressed by the atmosphere, depth and artistic pretension (in the best sense) of the first installment of "A Life Force." While I will wait for the completed work before making judgments, at this point I must express regret that Mr. Eisner's brilliance of dialogue and graphic technique is not mirrored in his prose style. A tenement "lying at anchor," indeed! Mr. Eisner's reckless disregard for the conventions of good prose threaten to seriously undermine the admirable ambition of his work.

But my main reason for writing is to advise you that you seriously mislead readers by labelling the "Shop Talk" feature an interview, as you did on the cover of No.1. For a genuine interview, the questioner at least cursorily researches his subject, as Mr. Eisner shows no interest in doing. "Shop Talk" is perfectly described by its title.

Also, a light editorial touch here and there in these talks would be appreciated. The passage where Neal Adams explains *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* to Mr. Eisner I found embarrassing, and I wish it had been deleted. I don't want to appear to be a provincial young fan who thinks the history of sequential art begins with Frank Miller; nevertheless, I think the O'Neill/Adams *Green Lantern* has established its place in the development of the form —Mr. Eisner's ignorance of it notwithstanding. It's safe to assume that all of your readers are familiar with it, rendering that section of the discussion superfluous.

Apart from this complaint, I am very pleased with the first issue and look forward to subsequent installments of "A Life Force."

Allen Varney
20689 Park Cir. W. No.2, Cupertino CA 95014

Allen: Adams explanation of the GL/GA series was indeed edited. We felt the passage we left in was interesting because the whole section of conversation provided explanations of how Adams and Denny O'Neil worked together, how the series came into being, how internal politics and personalities affected it, and how the philosophies of the writer and artist entered the stories. The synopsis provided for certain parts of stories [at the hospital; the threat of lawsuits] was necessary to show why Adams and O'Neil felt they were moving into a more realistic mode in comics. Incidentally, we've taken your advice and will now call the section "Shop Talk," period. —ds

A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE

Do you remember the experience of buying *that* special comic book? You know, when you were 10 years old, pedaling your bike in the rain to get that new special comic? Digging through the stacks, trying to find the book you *had* to have?

Buying *Will Eisner's Quarterly* No.1 was one of those experiences!

Thanks, Will. I was 10 years old again.

John Hitchcock
908 Olive Street, Greensboro NC 27401

A LIFE FORCE: POWERFUL

Regarding the possibilities of the direct sales market, Mr. Eisner said, "Historically, we will see this as the greatest thing to have happened to people like you and me." (Neal Adams interview)

Available to admirers of illustrated narratives are publications that provide interesting material and stretch the creativity of the storytellers. Considering the attention that is given to storytelling on film, equal respect can be given to "comic art" storytellers.

The stories and interview in this first issue of *Will Eisner's Quarterly* present talent and reflections justifying serious insight into the medium. "A Life Force" is a powerful individual view. The reprinted hero yarns capture the entertainment and dynamics of a past era. Mr. Eisner's questioning in the interview leads one to conclude that the teacher of "comic art" is also the student of it.

This quarterly represents the sum of many years' work. It is an important outlook on the entire field. The abstracts of artistic quality are brought into focus by Mr. Eisner's skill and knowledge.

Darryl S. Herrick
P.O. Box 111, Belcertown MA 01007

OVERWORKED TRADITION?

"A Life Force" is clearly meant to be earthy, immediate and characterological, yet in being so it has followed a literary tradition that has been overworked by "mainstream" writers.

Instead of portraying the desperate scurryings of the Shtarkah family (the name is a deftly handled piece of irony), a much more original and daring plot might have shown the economy being devestated by the sub rosa manueverings of the international bankers, many of whom were Jewish. I'm not a conspiratorial theorist, but the notion of a small cabal wreaking such havoc is intriguing. Two narratives might have been developed which would have complemented each other, instead of dwelling on the plight of the family.

The stylized artwork is evocative and carries the story, but its occasional excesses seem to correspond with similar faults with the characters. The soliloquies often interrupt the narrative jarringly, and are made ludicrous by the aura of solemnity they are cloaked in.

The emphasis on urban squalor and the basic nobility of the common man has done yeoman service for thousands of writers. These types of stories are meant to be endearingly humble and pathetic, and like abstract offshoots of Grand Guignol, they are meant to be bloodbaths. Instead of bodies being cut open, it's human dignity. But in what context? Hopelessness, despair, futility and abjectness all characterize this type of fable wherein the higher mechanizations of society and culture are offered as a backdrop for the detailed main characters to twitch against.

"A Life Force," to me, exalts the old stereotypes and perversions, concentrated on the grungy New York Jew who is reduced to cipher status. ...The whole urban squalor shtick is so done to death that even as a comic it stinks of cobwebs. Yet youngsters and ignorant oldsters are going to *kvell* on every line, because it's new to them, because they aren't well read enough or basically intelligent enough to see the triteness.

"A Life Force" is still a good effort, and you, Mr. Eisner, are a *mensch* for taking a stab at elevating comics above the level of silly writing and slugfests.

Tony Daley
2867 W. Leland Avenue, Chicago IL 60625

COMPLETIST COMPLAINT

I snapped up the first issue of *Will Eisner's Quarterly* not because I'm a fan of Eisner's new stuff —I'm not— but because of drooling anticipation of yet another full color reprint of a *complete Spirit* section from the 1940s. When I got the mag home I found that our old friend *Lady Luck* had been expurgated from the section in order to supply four pages of color to the Adams interview. To state that this was a disappointment is an understatement.

I'm aware that you never promised a *complete* section of *The Spirit* on the cover of your handsome new magazine... [but] believe me, there is a difference between a partially complete section and the whole thing — so much that I can promise that I would buy each issue of the Eisner magazine *just* for the color section. If the section is not complete, then four bucks is a lot to pay for a dozen pages.

All of this may sound like a slur on Mr. Eisner's recent work, but suffice it to say that "what is one man's meat," etc. I like the idea of what Eisner is attempting to do, but the reality leads me to question the graphic storytelling medium as a form of serious expression. His 40s work is charming and enchanting, but his recent material I find to be a little pretentious, rather boring, and more than a little depressing.

Lest this sound like too many sour grapes, Eisner has contributed immensely to my enjoyment of the comic medium and I love your new color *Spirit* comic, even if I do prefer the original color.

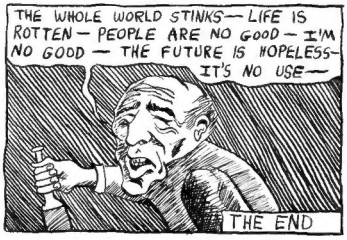
Keep up the excellent work, and *please* consider giving us fanatics a complete *Spirit* section for our money.

Don Hutchison
585 Merton Street, Toronto, Ontario M4S 1B4

Don: I know you aren't going to be happy to hear this, but we can no longer afford the luxury of a 16-page color section —not even with the higher cover price. Our contract with our previous printer expired and the new bid came in a whopping 50% higher than it had been. I have not been able to find another printer to match our old format at anywhere near the old price. The larger circulation of our Spirit comic book allows us to print in color. But the relatively low circulation of this magazine makes even 8 pages of color quite expensive per unit. As you can see, we have a complete Spirit section this time, but only half appears in color. This format at this price is the best compromise I can offer between price and color. If you want more color, we have to charge more. If you want a lower price, we must exclude all color. I'm especially sorry that you find the reprint section the only praiseworthy portion of the magazine. —dk

Send *your* comments to: WEQ Letters, c/o Kitchen Sink Press, No.2 Swamp Rd., Princeton WI 54968.

RODNEY SCHROETER
(RHYMES WITH "CRATER")
SAYS:
"ARE **YOU** TIRED OF STORIES THAT END LIKE **THIS**:



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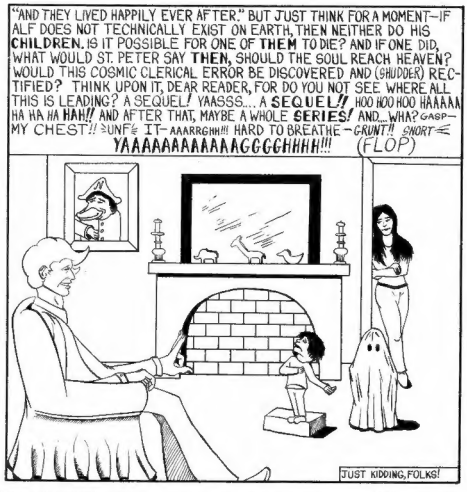
"AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER." BUT JUST THINK FOR A MOMENT—IF ALF DOES NOT TECHNICALLY EXIST ON EARTH, THEN NEITHER DO HIS **CHILDREN**. IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ONE OF **THEM** TO DIE? AND IF ONE DID, WHAT WOULD ST. PETER SAY **THEN**, SHOULD THE SOUL REACH HEAVEN? WOULD THIS COSMIC CLERICAL ERROR BE DISCOVERED AND (SHUDDER) RECTIFIED? THINK UPON IT, DEAR READER, FOR DO YOU NOT SEE WHERE ALL THIS IS LEADING? A SEQUEL! YAASSS... A **SEQUEL!!** HOO HOO HOO HAAAAA HA HA HA **HAH!!** AND AFTER THAT, MAYBE A WHOLE **SERIES!** AND... WHA? GASP— MY CHEST!! UNF— IT— AAARRGHH!! HARD TO BREATHE— GRUNT!! SNORT—
YAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGHHHH!!! (FLOP)
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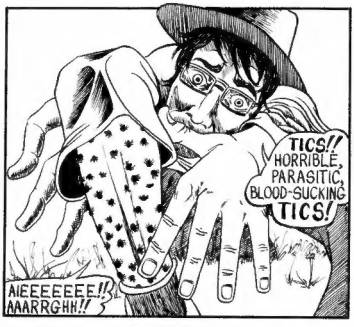

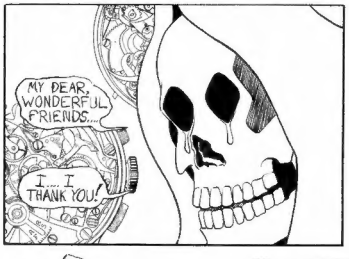

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